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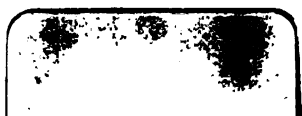


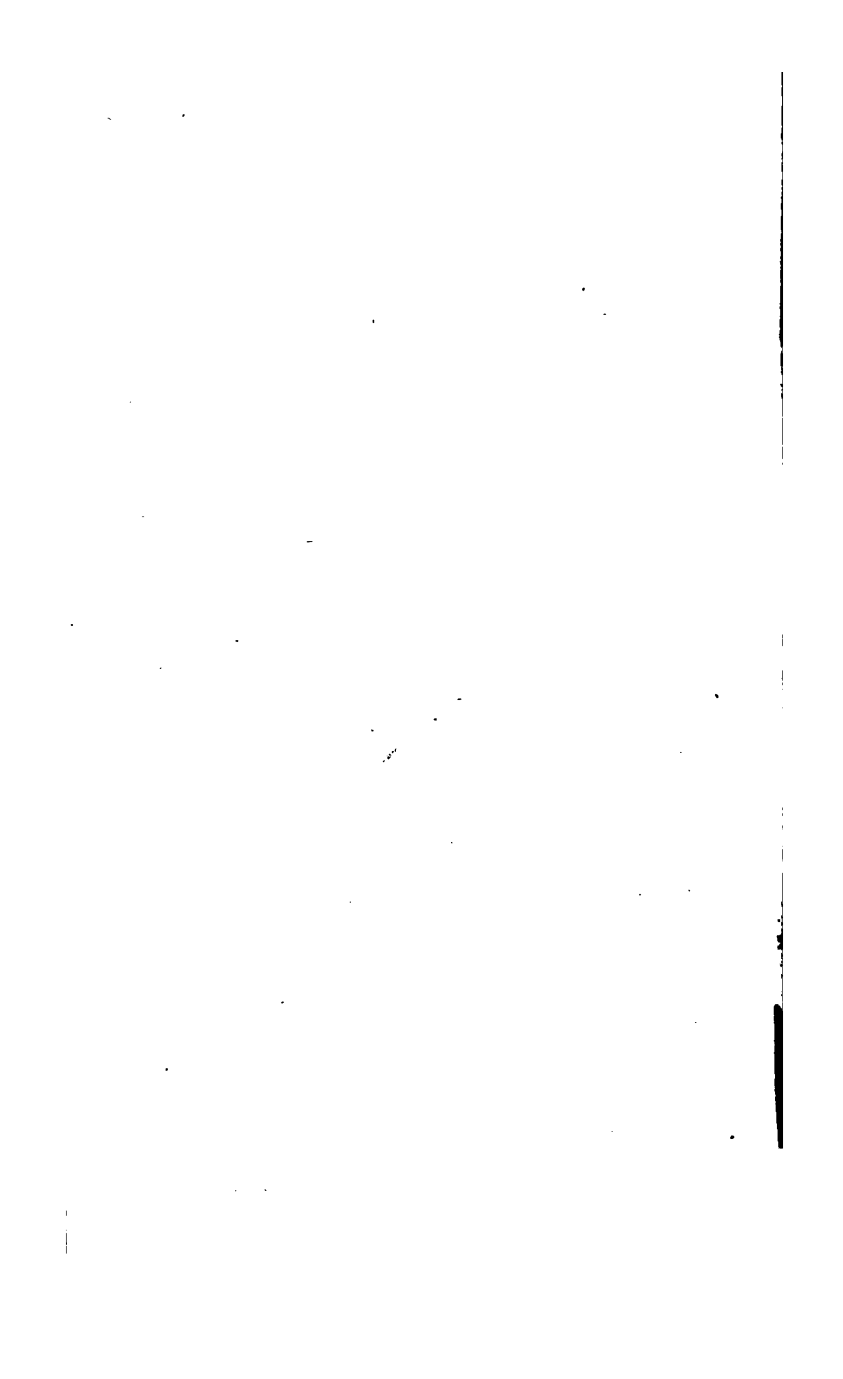


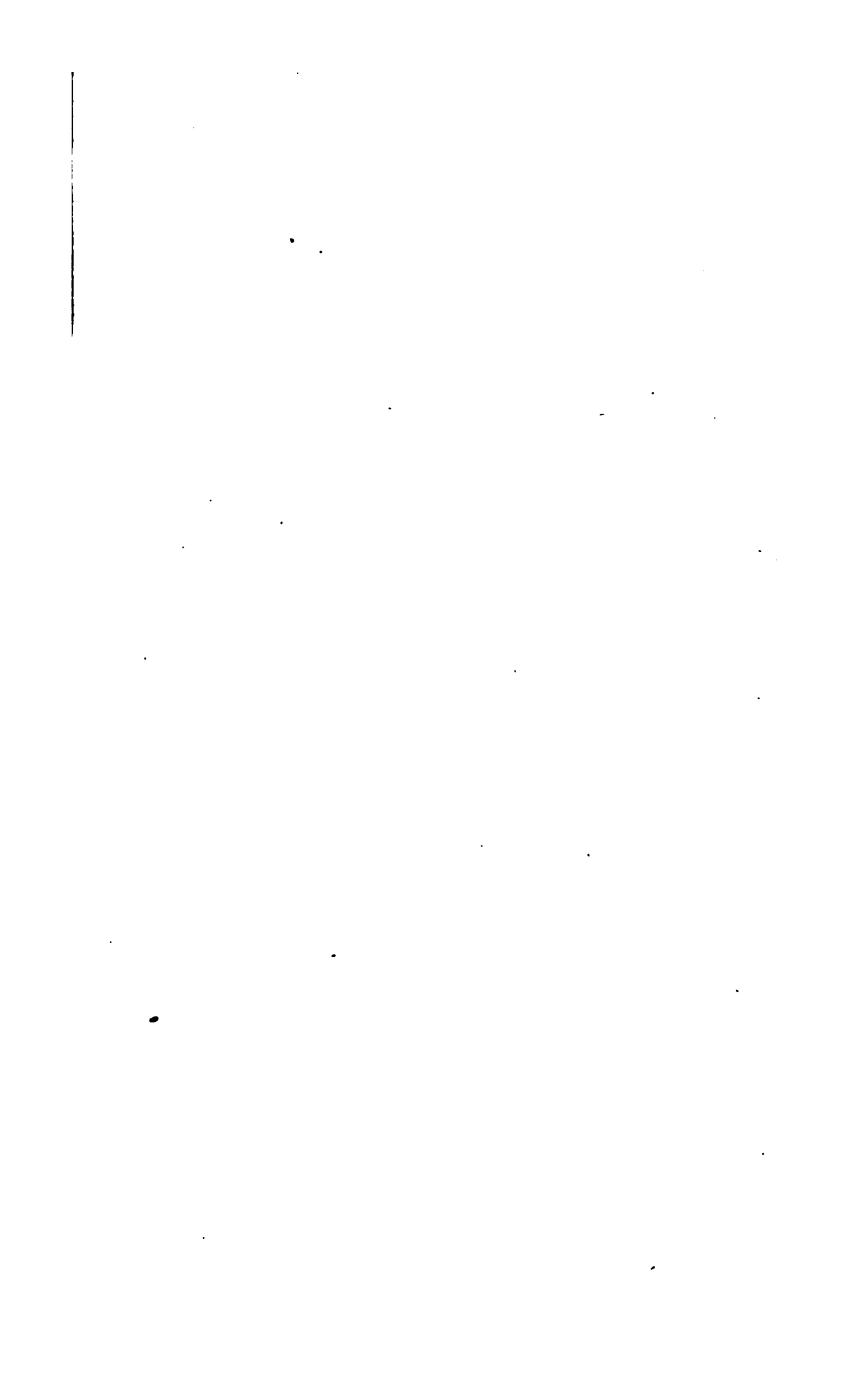
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A
TREATISE
ON
THE NATURE AND CAUSES
OF
DOUBT.

"When there is a great deal of smoke and no clear flame, it argues much *moisture* in the matter; yet it witnesseth, certainly, that there is *fire* there. And therefore, dubious questioning is much better evidence than that senseless deadness, which most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences, have no doubts. He never truly believed, who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. Never be afraid to doubt, if only you have the disposition to believe; and doubt, in order that you may end in believing the truth."—*Leighton*, in COLERIDGE'S "AIDS."

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5 H. 1831.

A

TREATISE
ON THE NATURE AND CAUSES
OF
DOUBT,
IN RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS;
(WITH A PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANITY).

WITH
AN APPENDIX,
ON SOME COMMON DIFFICULTIES;
LISTS OF BOOKS,
4c. 4c.

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PREFACE.

It is not the object of the present undertaking to discuss the Evidences, either of what is usually termed Natural Religion, or of Christianity.

It has been an oft confirmed observation of the author, that, previous to the consideration of formal treatises upon the authority and obligations of any particular religion, to most men of vigorous and independent thought, in such days as these especially, there exists a numerous and serious class of hindrances, which it is proper first should be removed, before you can expect them to apply with any degree of vigour to the study of what seems involved in so much, and such repelling confusion.

While the author of this little work craves permission to assume, in general, those elementary positions, of the existence of a supreme moral Governor, and that this life is a state of probation for another; he neither purposes to discuss the evidences of Christianity, nor to adduce any arguments which are *peculiar* to that revelation. Though he himself firmly believes it, and while he owns that it is his *ulterior* object to lead his readers to a similar conviction; yet, it is his present intention to discuss neither its evidences, its doctrines, its sanctions, nor any duties which are peculiar to it.

What he earnestly desires is, rather, to act as pioneer through the various difficulties which obstruct a free approach to that country, which is described, when reached, to be so tranquil and superior.

Feeling deeply for the pain of that state of universal scepticism, under which, in common as he supposes with most students of the present day, at the outset of their philosophical speculations, he himself once most unpleas-

ingly laboured; which Bacon* so memorably describes; which Byron sought so unremittingly to inculcate; and which Mr. Stewart† so justly designates as a signal imperfection in the general characteristic of mind in the present day. Desirous, and even *confident* (to him who will vouchsafe these sheets a calm perusal), by removing some of the chief impediments which once embarrassed and perplexed himself, to clear the way for a more satisfactory and impartial view of the evidences of that religion, which, even the man who doubts it most, generally professes himself *willing*, if he was able, to believe; the author ventures to lay the following observations before the public.

They will, indeed, interest few, but such as have been in the habit of using their minds closely upon subjects of this kind; and there-

* Essay on Atheism.

† Philos. Hum. Mind.—Introduction, Part ii. sec. 1.
See also, chap. ii. of part ii. of this treatise, near the beginning.

fore it is not in the hope of an extensive circulation, but of usefulness rather, that they are committed to the press. It is not every man who is called to scrutinize the nature and evidence of things, in the way supposed throughout the following treatise; nor is it every man who is forced by his situation to feel the weight of difficulties and objections, which are here considered and prescribed for. It would indeed be an overwhelming presumption against the truth of any proposed revelation, if it imposed this on us all: the posture of mind, which is the object of this treatise, can only be that of a comparatively small portion of the community; though it is in these enlightened times, assuredly, an increasing one. In one part or other, however, of this not cumbrous treatise, it is hoped a solution is afforded of almost every specious of Religious Doubt, which is either commonly urged, or is peculiar to our times. Though no one chapter in particular may meet the whole exigences of any one case (for the modifications of doubt are so infinitely varied), yet, it

is hoped, that in the course of these explanations, full relief will be found somewhere. At all events, that the united effect of all, will be abundantly satisfactory to the sincere inquirer.

In the main body of the work, it is hoped that a sound and rational account is given of the causes which either indispose for, or hinder the conviction from, an examination of that evidence, which, notwithstanding all its attendant difficulties, has been deemed conclusive by such multitudes of the acutest, the best, and wisest.

In the Appendix, will be found a more particular solution of various objections, which either were not of sufficient importance to interrupt the general argument, or which seemed to require a separate and fuller discussion than would have been there proper.

Lists of Books will be also given there for the further prosecution of the chief points.

And an Index will be subjoined, affording the means of ready access to any part required.

That this little work will be full of many, many imperfections, the writer presumes not to doubt; but in so good cause, he does not anticipate to be severely visited for what he has done his utmost, though surrounded by the most unceasing and wearying calls of an entirely different nature, to prepare with diligence and solicitude. If it has been painful for him to force his mind into trains of reminiscence, which, if he had consulted his own happiness solely, he would willingly have forgone; he consoles himself with the reflection, that the pain is over when he sends this humble endeavour to the world; and imperfect, though it be, ventures to anticipate that it may possibly bring conviction and increased enjoyment to some of the most interesting of his fellow creatures.

He lays claim to no originality whatever. He is aware that this species of composition is the humblest of its kind. He has freely used every author of every complexion who seemed likely to advance his purpose. He only wishes that he could have gained access to

the works of numerous others, which it has been impossible for him to see. Under this privation, however, he is consoled by reflecting, that it is more in the appendages than in the main body of his work, that any prejudice is, on this account, likely to be felt. Should a subsequent edition ever be demanded, he will endeavour, profiting by the animadversions of his friends (and *enemies*, if he can have any such, in an undertaking of this sort), to render his lists more extensive, and the whole more worthy.

He is not aware that there is any work of a precisely similar character. Admirable as many of those treatises, most commonly recommended for the perusal of the philosophical inquirer into the truth of Revelation, confessedly are in themselves; he has remarked, that they, almost universally, set out from a point too much in advance of a man hedged in by a thousand popular difficulties, and a general state of uncertainty as to the nature and fairness of that kind of Proof upon which assent is demanded. It is, as is already observed,

the peculiar object of this treatise, to alleviate these difficulties, and *prepare* the candid inquirer for a consideration of the positive evidence which is adduced, by the best writers, on the history and doctrines of Christianity.

“Indisputably,” writes the late hapless, but interesting Byron, a year or two only before he was withdrawn from among us, “indisputably the firm believers in the gospel have a *great advantage over all others*: for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (as the worst, for them) out of nothing, nothing can arise,—not even sorrow.”*

This “great advantage over all others,” which poor Byron speaks of here, it is the humble desire of the author to be made the instrument of helping to confer on many. To

* See letter, given at length, Appendix, ii.

increase the fund of human happiness has been his sanguine wish; and even though he may have greatly failed in the attainment of his whole object, he yet hopes to have rendered some service, however insignificant; at all events, to have furnished some useful and available materials for others, more capable, but not more sincere well-wishers than himself, to the intellectual and moral and spiritual good of his fellow creatures.

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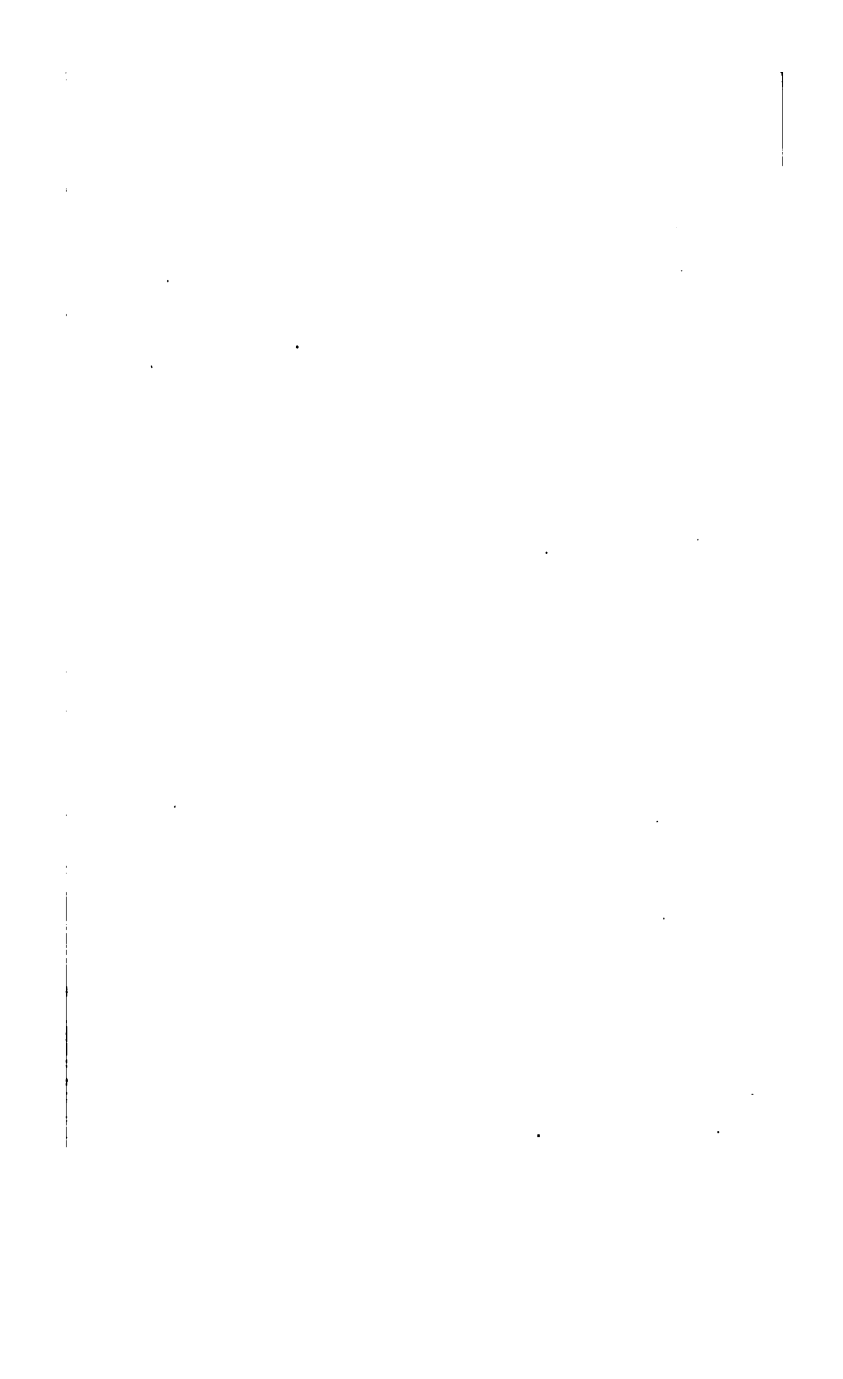
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PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

MISCONCEPTIONS AS TO THE *nature* OF THE PROOF IN RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS.

UNDER this head, I shall speak almost exclusively in the words of others, for I confess myself unable to express the same things so well.

The object of this chapter is, as its title designates, to discuss *the kind of proof* on which we are, in reason bound to act, in questions of a religious nature. And the following passage, from a deeply tried and admirable writer, will carry us at once into the matter, and a solution of it.

“ My mind found rest in that kind of conviction, which belongs particularly to moral subjects; and seems to depend on *an intuitive*

perception of the truth through broken clouds of doubt, which it is not in the power of mortal man completely to dispel. Let no one suppose that I allude to either mysterious or enthusiastic feelings: I speak of conviction prepared by examination. But, any man accustomed to observe the workings of the mind, will agree, that conviction, in intricate moral questions, comes finally in the shape of internal feeling. A *perception* perfectly distinct from syllogistic reasoning, but which exerts the strongest power over our moral nature. Such perception of the truth, is, indeed, the spring of our most important actions, the common bond of social life, the ground of retributive justice, the parent of all human laws. Yet it is inseparable from more or less doubt: for *doubtless* conviction is only to be found about objects of sense, or those abstract creations of the mind, pure number and dimension, which employ the ingenuity of mathematicians.”*

* *Blanco White's Internal Evidence against Cath.*
p. 27.

Incalculable harm is done by well-meaning religious

The species of conviction, so well described in the foregoing, as the only attainable kind in subjects of an historical and moral nature, is, by writers on this department of human knowledge, usually denominated, that of *probable* evidence. Not to imply—as the profound Dugald Stewart so well observes—“Not to imply any *deficiency* in the proof, but only to mark the *particular nature of that proof*, as contradistinguished from other species of evidence. It is opposed, not to what is certain, but to what admits of being demonstrated after

persons overlooking this, and insisting, with warmth, upon the precise degree of conviction each person ought to feel, upon every point which they propose. Faith, is not *sight*, to however high a degree it may attain. The Scriptures never assert it to be so; though some intemperate expounders have seemed to imply this; (for instance, the violent charge of the Calvinist Travers, against the truly learned Hooker).—*Hooker's Works*, vol. iii). See, there also, Hooker's memorable reply (sec. 9), the farthest removed from that injurious, unphilosophical, and most unscriptural system which prevails with some, of reviling and speaking contemptuously of others, who have not attained to some one particular *standard* of conviction, on every subject with themselves.

the manner of mathematicians." And then he subjoins a remark which, while it confirms in every way the exquisitely true delineation of Mr. White, above quoted, is well calculated to illustrate the position assumed as the basis of this chapter; and explains the otherwise almost unaccountable difficulties of some persons and authors, even of the highest name and integrity. "This difference," adds Mr. Stewart, "between the technical meaning of the word *probability*, as employed by logicians, and the notion usually attached to it in the business of life, has led many authors of the highest name, in some of the most important arguments which can employ human reason, to overlook the irresistible evidence which was placed before their eyes, in search of another mode of proof, altogether unattainable in moral inquiries, and which, if it could be attained, would not be less liable to the cavils of sceptics."*

On the subject of this only attainable species of proof in moral and religious inquiries,

* *Stewart's Elements of the Mind.* Vol. ii. ch. 4.

the learned to the latest posterity, will owe a debt of gratitude to Bishop Butler, for his profound and well-known "*Analogy*." It seems to have been reserved for this great man to achieve, in this department of human knowledge, improvements, scarcely inferior to those of his great contemporary Sir Isaac Newton, in the world of nature. It is only to be regretted that his celebrated treatise, is, both from its style and structure, so repelling to many who might otherwise be induced to read it. It is encumbered with many speculations which are now seldom heard of; and these meet one so thickly throughout the whole of the first division of the work, that it is not unfrequently abandoned in despair by many, who would highly appreciate the arguments which were awaiting them in the second grand partition; and to which, a more experienced hand might at once have directed them, to the unspeakable relief of their heartfelt and perplexing difficulties. Without producing any of Butler's arguments in support of the

Christian revelation in particular, I feel that I shall nevertheless do good service to those who are in uncertainty as to the nature of the evidence which they ought to have, by laying before them, from this sagacious writer, a few of those invaluable statements, which have relieved the anxieties of so many thousands in this matter.

Amongst so much to the purpose, it is not easy to select. Perhaps, however, those which are presently to follow are as appropriate as any others. Most, in first setting out in their inquiries into the just grounds of human action and assent, have experienced difficulty in getting clear notions of that *probable* evidence, of which we have already spoken. It seemed a fair way to argue, "I cannot admit this, until, *all* my objections are removed—until you have given me a *clear* conception, and an *unclouded* demonstration, that it is obligatory! While there remain so many opposing circumstances, in the midst of such conflict, I cannot believe." Every thoughtful student has experienced something of this kind, at

some period or other of his life. It is perfectly natural; the error arises, from confounding together two species of proof, essentially different; both equally binding, but each, perfectly distinct, as the following will well explain. "*Probable evidence* is essentially distinguished from demonstrative by this, that it admits of degrees, and of all variety of them, from the highest moral certainty, to the very lowest presumption—it affords in its very nature but an imperfect kind of information, and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities; *but to us, probability is the very guide of life.*"* From these things it follows, that in questions of difficulty,

* "In the economy of human life, we act almost entirely upon probabilities; and in most instances I believe it will be found, that the more important the tendency, or the result of a particular action, or series of actions may be, the slighter need be the preponderance of probability to determine our adopting it. It is probable, for example, that we may be heirs-at-law to a valuable estate; therefore we examine the legal instruments which ascertain our title to such estate. It is probable a particular line of conduct will be successful; therefore we pursue it. It is probable, a certain commercial speculation will be productive; therefore we put it in prac-

or such as are thought so; where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, or is not seen; if the result of the examination be, that there appears, upon the whole, any the lowest presumption on one side, though in the lowest degree greater, this determines the question, even in matters of speculation; and in matters of practice, will lay us under an absolute and formal obligation, in point of prudence and of interest, to *act* upon that presumption or low probability, though it be so low as to leave the mind in very great doubt which is the truth. For surely, a man is as really bound in prudence to do what upon the whole appears, according to the best of his judgment, to be for his happiness, as what he certainly knows to be so. Nay, further, in questions of great consequence, a reasonable man will think it concerns him to remark lower probabilities and presumptions than these; such as amount to no more than shewing one side to be as sup-

tice. It is probable, a particular medicine will be beneficial to the constitution; therefore we have recourse to it."—*Olinthus Gregory* on Christianity, i., 282.

posable and credible as the other; nay, such as but amount to much less even than this. For numberless instances might be mentioned respecting the common pursuits of life, where a man would be thought, in a literal sense, distracted, who would not act, and with great application too, not only on an even chance, but upon much less, and where the probability or chance was greatly against his succeeding.”—*Introduction to the Analogy.*

“Persons who speak of the evidence of religion as doubtful, and of this supposed doubtfulness as a positive argument against it, should be put upon considering, what that evidence is which they act upon with regard to their temporal interests. Numberless instances there are, in the daily course of life, in which all men think it reasonable to engage in pursuits, though the probability is greatly against succeeding; and to make such provision for themselves as it is supposable they *may* have occasion for, though the plain acknowledged probability is, that they never shall.”—*Part ii., ch. vi.*

And, of *doubting* concerning the evidence of religion, Butler thus clearly exposes the commonly urged fallacy, that doubting is, in *itself*, any valid argument against it. For "*doubting*," he truly remarks, "*necessarily implies some degree of evidence for that of which we doubt.*" It as much supposes evidence, lower degrees of evidence, as belief supposes higher, and certainly higher still. And any one who will a little attend to the nature of evidence, will easily carry this observation on, and see that between no evidence at all, and that degree of it which affords ground of doubt, there are, as many intermediate degrees, as there are between that degree which is the ground of doubt, and demonstration. And though we have not faculties to distinguish these degrees of evidence with any sort of exactness, yet in proportion as they are discerned, they ought to influence our practice. From these things it must follow, that doubting concerning religion, implies such a degree of evidence for it, as joined, with the consideration of its *importance*, unquestionably lays

men under the obligations before mentioned, to have a dutiful regard to it in all their behaviour."—*Part ii., ch. vi.*

Christianity is confessedly founded on historical, not on demonstrative evidence; and therefore, mere guess, supposition, and possibilities, when opposed to such evidence, prove nothing but that historical evidence is not demonstrative; and, it can never be sufficient to overthrow direct historical evidence, indolently to say, that there are so many principles, from whence men are liable to be deceived themselves and disposed to deceive others, that one knows not what to believe. And it is surprising persons can keep reflecting, that this very manner of speaking supposes they are not satisfied that there is nothing in the evidence of which they speak thus; or that they can avoid observing, if they do make this reflection, that it is, on such a subject—a very material one.—*Part ii., ch. vii.*

With reference to that *irresistible* degree of evidence, which some are apt to imagine the Almighty would certainly vouchsafe to any

revelation which he might be pleased to make to man; Butler, I think, most accurately observes, that supposing this life, what it is—a state of trial and probation—“*the speculative difficulties in which religion is involved, may make the principal part of some persons’ trial*.”* that there seems no possible reason to be given, why one may not be in a state of moral probation with regard to the exercise of our faculties upon the subject of religion, as we are with regard to our behaviour on common affairs. And thus, that religion is not intuitively true, but a matter of deduction and inference; that a conviction of its truth is not forced upon every one, but left to be, by some collected with heedful attention to premises: this as much constitutes religious probation, as much affords sphere, scope, opportunity,

* See, this just position, varied and enlarged, in “Records of the Creation,” by *J. B. Sumner*. Vol. ii., 434-437 (3d edit.).

Paley’s, masterly work on the Evidences of Christianity.—Part iii., ch. vi.

Sumner’s “Internal Evidences,” p. 426 (1st edit.); indeed, the whole of the concluding chapter.

for right and wrong behaviour, as any thing whatever does."—*Part ii., ch. vi.*

Assuredly, we can most of us call readily to mind, persons, so abstracted by their circumstances from all external temptation, as to make it difficult to conceive, unless it be in something of this sort, in what, their religious probation can exist.

For one who feels such a weight of obligation as the author of this little treatise, to Bishop Butler, it is not easy to know where to stop amidst so much, which he still feels it might be of service to produce. Those, however, of his readers who may wish to pursue this branch of the general argument of this chapter further, are referred with earnest confidence to the "Analogy" itself (especially for the first reading, to those parts marked out at foot),* and also, to the passages indicated at foot, in† *other* writers, who have well understood the point in question.

* Read, the Introduction—omit all the first part—read all the second.

† "Life of Locke," by *Lord King*, p. 316 (4th edit.), in *Paper on Enthusiasm*.

Before leaving this head, however, to discuss in the following chapter, the *other* prominent intellectual cause of the doubtfulness which prevails with many on the subject of religion, I cannot refrain from adding one quotation more, from an author whose elevation and independence of thought we all admire. I quote this, partly by way of weighty conclusion to the general subject of this chapter, and not least, because at the end of it, an idea is suggested, which, borne constantly in mind, would free the question of "what is the proper evidence to believe and act on," from an immense load of perplexity and misconception.

Bacon's "Advancement of Learning" (Book v., ch. 4, sec. 4), treating of the different kind of demonstrations and proofs to different kinds of matter and subjects.

"Spectator" (*Addison*), No. 465, on Nature of Belief, &c.

Sumner's "Records," i., 303-319 (3d edit. 1825).

Paley's "Evidences," part iii., ch. 6, "on want of universality in knowledge and reception of Christianity, and of greater clearness in the evidence."

Gambier, "on Moral Evidence," &c. &c.

The passage I allude to, is from Lord King's late interesting publication from the papers of Mr. Locke (a name on *such* a subject, of no common authority). "If a man," he writes, (*see, Paper on Enthusiasm, p. 315, 4to. edit.*) "if a man, will embrace no opinion but what he can free from all difficulties and remove all objections, I fear he will have but very narrow thoughts, and find very little that he shall assent to. What, then, will you say; shall he embrace that for truth which has improbabilities in it which he cannot master? This has a clear answer! In contradictory opinions, one must be true, that he cannot doubt! Which then shall he take? That which is accompanied with the greatest light and evidence—that which is freest from the grosser absurdities, though our narrow capacities cannot penetrate it on every side. Some men have made objections against the belief of a God, and think they ought to be heard and hearkened to, because perhaps nobody can unravel all the difficulties of creation and providence; which, are but arguments of the

weakness of our understandings, and not against the being of a God."

The argument of the foregoing is valuable every way; but, not least, inasmuch as it exposes a fallacy, which, followed into its legitimate consequences, must end in the subversion of all religious belief whatever. Ingenious arguments have at different times been framed, to disprove, for instance, the moral government, as well as the very being of a God, and also to disprove the *immortality* of the human soul; and certainly, if we are not to admit these until we can *understand* them, and are able to answer all the objections which bad, ingenious men may urge against them, we shall then, indeed, have "*very* narrow thoughts, and find very little that we shall assent to." But if, though we can neither understand, nor explain any thing of the nature of these fundamental truths, we may yet venture, in defiance both of the atheist and materialist, to believe, that there is a superintending providence; and, a continuance of the soul, (notwithstanding the apparent

destruction of it with the body) beyond the grave—if, in defiance of the objections which confessedly clever, though we think mistaken, men have urged against these things, and understanding less than nothing of their nature, only that we feel assured in our understanding that they *are* so; if we can yet believe, *these* unfathomable mysteries upon such grounds, and under such circumstances, let us remember, that we may believe others also—the Christian mysteries for instance, in the same way and for the same reasons.* The question evidently is, not at all, whether we can understand the nature or *essence* of the mystery, or

* On the subject of Mysteries, see "Letters on the Christian Religion," by *Olinthus Gregory*, vol. i., ch. iv., where the subject is discussed in a scientific and striking manner, well worthy the reputation of that distinguished philosopher.

Lord King's "Life of Locke," p. 105 (1st edit.).

Butler's "Analogy," Part ii., ch. 2 and 3.

"Disquisitions on several subjects," by *Soame Jenyns*, Esq. Disq. 6.

"A View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion," by the same acute writer,—near the end, p. 159. 1776.

whether our minds may not be embarrassed with many doubts respecting the existence of it; but simply, whether on the whole there appears a greater probability in its favour than against it. Whether, if we had had the same degree of preponderating evidence in favour of any speculation, or plan, or duty in the ordinary affairs of life, we should not have submitted our reason to the influence of that, however small degree of preponderating evidence, and acted on it, as indeed we are every day obliged to, though through a host of conflicting doubts, nevertheless, with firm vigour and unremitting perseverance.

This present chapter has had sole reference, to the *kind* of evidence, upon which a revelation from heaven must ever, and can only stand.

The following chapter has reference, not, to the *kind* of proof, but, to the positive *facts* which are adduced in support of such revelation; for, if these be not studied, our knowledge of the way in which we should entertain them, will be, manifestly, of no avail.

PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER II.

INADEQUATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE *facts* OF THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

So far from feeling wonder at the degree of scepticism, which is complained to prevail among scientific and thoughtful men in the present day, many of those who are loudest in the accusation should be reminded, that, humanly speaking, the error lies, more with themselves, than those whom they so harshly censure. Can it be sufficient in days like these, to send men, as they are sent daily, abroad into the world, amidst the sophistry and the trials which will surround them, with no other proof in their possession, that the Bible contains a revelation from heaven, than, the simple affirmation of one's parents and schoolmaster? How inconsistent to suppose, that a man, now immersed in the engrossing

studies of an University, the toil of a profession or a trade—forced to act for himself and vindicate the opinions he professes—shall come, by a species of intuition, able, to give to every one that asketh him, a reason for the hope that is in him! Much as we may have loved our parents and revered our instructors, it is too much to assume, that their simple *assertion* as to the value and importance of a revelation, will of itself convince others, or support us, under the disparagements, or direct negations of what we evidently know next to nothing.

I conceive it a radical error in the general system of education in this country, that, while the truths of the established religion are sedulously propounded, the *reasons why those truths must be believed*, are so rarely taught. All inquiries of this nature, during our childhood, are too frequently silenced by the general assurance, that we ought to believe whatever we find in the Bible; and that it is highly wrong to make question on points of which there can be no doubt; which, so

many of the best and wisest have been content to act on and believe before us; and which, received into the heart, are evidently productive of such invaluable effects. This species of argument is undoubtedly valid as far as it goes; and it is undeniable, that millions have passed through time into a happy eternity, with none other than such general grounds for their convictions: it would indeed contradict all our notions of the goodness of the Deity, if we supposed no child or poor man could be a Christian without being an historian and philosopher; but still, every day's experience evinces it to be a most fatal error, and as irrational as it is unscriptural, for a man to be turned adrift into the wide ocean of those bold and universal inquiries which peculiarly characterise our days, unacquainted with any further grounds for their religious tenets, than, that their predecessors believed them before them: and that, *therefore*, they do so too.

With little more than such reason for the hope that is in them, are multitudes launched

forth daily to our universities, to the hospitals, the army and navy, to the counting-house, and the world at large. The inevitable consequence is, that almost immediately, if, as is generally the case, they mix freely in various society, the implicit conviction of their childhood receives a blow; which is quickly repeated; and, aided by a variety of certain and concomitant events, they soon find themselves gliding, into the shoreless sea, of an universal scepticism. The victims of this parental negligence (for whether in ignorance or no, *negligence*, with so many concise and powerful antidotes at hand, it must be called), are then left to plunge, from one system to another; the more vigorous the mind, the wider the aberration: too uninformed in the history and proofs of their religion, to be properly called unbelievers; yet, now, too much immersed in other engrossing plans and speculations, to sit down quietly to the examination of matters of this self-denying and humble kind. If they are not exclusively engaged in manual toil; and are at all disposed to find some

resting place for the baffled mind, almost inevitably plunging, into what is the most unadvisable of all studies, in such a frame and at such a time, the endless labyrinths of metaphysics: * with minds so irregularly trained, mistaking confusion for depth of thought; doubting every thing; and, especially if impaired health be the consequence, becoming more and more lost and indifferent to things around them, the mere creatures of impulse; blazing up occasionally into, perhaps, startling corruscations of animal and intellectual energy, only to sink into a deeper apathy, and more profound oblivion of their position, as members of the social body, and their share in its ordinary calls and obligations.

Who, that has mixed largely in the more enlightened circles of society, has not been witness to a multitude of such cases—modified by the degree of health, and situation, and peculiar tendencies of the individual; but, in the general outline of character, the same?

* See Appendix iv.

And whence, humanly speaking, in numerous cases, this distortion of what is noble, and right, and useful, but from the deficiencies just noted in their early education; taught, probably, with anxious solicitude, the doctrines of revelation, but with an obliviousness of the opposition both from within and from without, with which these holy things would one day assuredly be assailed;—carefully, perhaps, trained in the obligations of Christianity, but utterly uninstructed in the *grounds* of those obligations;—with scarce any other reason for being a Christian, than for being a Mahometan, an Infidel, or a Jew.

I have expressed myself strongly on this subject, because I have felt that the error I have censured is fraught with unneeded misery and harm. Concise and plain statements of the facts upon which the Christian obligations rest, are easy to be obtained in forms adapted to all ages and capacities: and until such historical and fundamental information is more universally made a part of the early education of men who are afterward

to take a stirring and independent part in the business of life, it is not to be expected that the confusion and irregularity of thought on such subjects, amongst the otherwise, in other matters, well-informed, will, in the least degree be diminished.

But now, that such sceptical opinions, on the question, not of particular doctrines only, but of the very truth of Christianity, do confessedly and very widely, though more or less secretly, and in great measure from the causes just enumerated, prevail,—may no effort be expected from men who see this palpable fault in their own early education, to remove it?

It has been demonstrated, in the preceding chapter, that, though evidence may be doubtful, it may yet be prudent to act, and that very decidedly, on such doubtful evidence; that, in most of the chief affairs of human life, we must either act upon such kind of evidence, or else never act at all; that, to us, probability, and not certainty, is the guide of life; that, it is not necessary to understand all

the properties, relations, and laws of a thing (as has been sometimes unthinkingly affirmed), in order, that we may believe it: we may, for instance, believe in the existence of a Deity and of another world, though we can understand nothing of the nature of the one, nor of the mode of the other; the *facts* we may believe, though of their nature, essence, and mode, we know less than nothing; and although ingenious surmises have been started, contradictory of these truths,—and it must be owned difficult specifically to answer all the arguments which have been urged against them,—yet may we feel a moral conviction, an internal feeling, that they are nevertheless most certainly true. Our argument is,—“ I know, that the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of these things is utterly beyond my feeble apprehensions, yet can I readily, and most assuredly do, believe them; and although there may seem to lie such numerous objections against these things, which I am unable to answer, yet, on the whole, I am persuaded that there is abundantly sufficient weight on the other

side for me to act on,—and upon which to stake every thing, to me however dear or important.” It is thus we argue with respect to the facts of *Deism*, or natural religion, so called.

And it is precisely thus that we must argue with reference to the facts of a *revealed* religion. There may be mysteries,—things difficult and beyond comprehension in it; but, that circumstance, alone, is no greater hindrance to my receiving the truths of it, than the truths of *Deism*. There may be conflicting evidence, and a host of difficulties; but that is nothing, if there, on the whole, seems to me a preponderating weight of evidence in its favour. The true question is, what are the facts alleged in proof of it? what was its *origin*—what its *progress*—and what are the various *collateral things* urged in confirmation of it by its more learned and able advocates?

The neglect of *such* inquiries among thousands of otherwise well informed and scientific and amiable men of the present day, is the

undoubted cause of a large portion of their prevailing scepticism. Accurate as is their information on other points—on the history of many countries, and many people, and many sciences; on the circumstances of the origin and subsequent progress, and the nature of vital Christianity, they are often confessedly and singularly deficient: they were probably never taught them in their childhood; and since they have become men, they have heard so many ingenious suppositions and arguments against them, that they have allowed themselves, almost unwittingly perhaps, to rest in these objections; not, perhaps, believing them; as sceptical of them as of what they oppose; but still, utterly ignorant * of the various and simple statements of facts which are never-

* For instance, it is not long since I met with a young man, I should suppose about twenty years of age, of as good general education as most I write chiefly for, who had not the *slightest* idea that the origin and chief circumstance of the Christian revelation, were noticed by any contemporary writers, whether Jews or Heathens. He was at that moment *beginning*, under great disadvantages, for the *first* time, to make such elementary inquiries as these!

theless easily within their reach; statements, clearly and calmly made for such purposes, by some of the most sagacious and independent thinkers, as well as the best men that ever lived, and admitted as satisfactory and proper grounds for human assent and action, by multitudes of their compeers,* once as sceptical on these subjects, as we can be.

If it be objected that there are many able and distinguished men who have, and do doubt the truth of the Christian religion, we would reply, that probably their temper and habits of life may be such as to engender prejudices against it; or, that probably, notwithstanding their diligence in investigating the kind of proof and degree of evidence for other things, they have never yet bestowed any seriously

* "When I first set out in the world, I had friends who endeavoured to shake my belief in the Christian religion. I saw difficulties which staggered me, but I kept my mind open to conviction. The evidences and doctrines of Christianity, studied with attention, made me a most firm and persuaded believer of the Christian religion. I have made it the rule of my life, and it is the ground of my future hopes."—*Lord Lyttleton*.

upon Christianity. A man may be a good anatomist, or astronomer, or geologist, for instance, without being able to pronounce a good opinion on a well-established fact in the history, even of his own country; he may be utterly ignorant of it, and yet be a very well informed man in other histories, and some other things. Sir Isaac Newton's remark to the celebrated Dr. Halley,* is, I think, a full solution of all the scepticism of able men, not originating, in any private habits, which may make religious restraints displeasing.

Nor are we disposed to concede, that the inconsistencies and absurdities, and sectarian squabbings amongst religious professors, nor the ridiculous rites and superstitions of Roman Catholic countries, overthrow at all, the *facts* upon which Christianity is founded: disgrace-

* "Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, because that is a subject you have studied and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for you have not studied it. I have; and am certain you know nothing of the matter."—See *Life of Evelyn*.

ful as they are, and serious hindrances as they are, in the way of the sincere inquirer, they are certainly no arguments at all against the *facts* of the Christian evidence. They are only proofs that such absurd and hypocritical persons either, know nothing of the matter, or, knowing what is their interest, they do not attend to it; which is in no wise peculiar to Christianity. The inconsistencies above alluded to, are no more proofs in themselves that the facts of Christianity are not true, than the often equally gross inconsistencies of the professing Deist are proofs that the facts of Deism are not true. The conduct of hypocrites, or enthusiasts, in either case, has no necessary connexion with the truth or falsehood of the tenets they profess: the tenets may be true, though their conduct belies their conviction of them. So that this circumstance—no more than the cavils of clever sceptics—is a reasonable ground for delaying an inquiry into a subject, on which so many, more consistent and better informed, have expressed and are acting, on a perfect conviction.

The *facts* of the Christian history *must* be inquired into and acted on, though the evidence appear, to however high a degree, doubtful; if, on the whole, we think there may be the slightest preponderance in its favour, or any thing of future happiness likely to be hazarded by the neglect of it.

It is surely, most improper, to say, “notwithstanding all you have urged, I positively, in the midst of my numerous avocations and incessant labour in my business or profession, have not, time, for such investigations!”—“Heaven, being our great business and interest,” writes Mr. Locke, “the knowledge which may direct us thither, is certainly so too; so that, *this*, is, without peradventure, the study, that ought to take, the *first and chiefest place in our thoughts*.” *

And again, hear the same great philosopher (in his “Conduct of the Understanding,” sec. 8), anticipating these very difficulties of the *want of time*: “Besides his particular calling for the support of this life, every one has a

* Lord King’s “Life of Locke,” 4to. ed. p. 95.

concern, in his *future* life, which he is bound to look after. This engages his thoughts in religion, and here it mightily concerns him to understand and reason right. Men, therefore, cannot be excused from understanding the words and framing the general notions relating to religion right. The one day of seven, besides other days of rest, allow, in the Christian world, time enough for this (had they no other idle hours), if they would but make use of these vacancies from their daily labour, and apply themselves to an improvement of knowledge with as much diligence as they often do to a great many other things that are useless."

I have already spoken of the immense value of the writings of Butler, to men of a philosophical cast of mind, in their examination of these important matters: the following passage is so inimitable of its kind, and so suited to our present purpose, that, in drawing this chapter to a close, I cannot resist the temptation of here transcribing it; and I do really feel that it may prove a valuable assistance to

many of my readers, who have yet to become acquainted with the writings of this most sagacious observer of mankind.

“The general proof of natural religion and of Christianity, does, I think, lie level to common men: even those, the greater part of whose time, from childhood to old age, is taken up with providing for themselves and their families the common conveniences, perhaps necessities of life: those I mean of this rank, who ever think at all of asking after proof, or attending to it. Common men, were they as much in earnest about religion as about their temporal affairs, are capable of being convinced upon real evidence, that there is a God who governs the world; and they feel themselves to be of a moral nature, and accountable creatures. And as Christianity entirely falls in with this their natural sense of things, so they are capable, not only of being persuaded, but of being made to see, that there is evidence of miracles wrought in attestation of it, and many appearing completions of prophecy. But though this proof is

real and conclusive, yet it is liable to objections, and may be run up into difficulties, which, however, persons who are capable not only of talking of, but of really seeing, are capable also of seeing through—that is, not of clearing up and answering them so as to satisfy their *curiosity* (for of such knowledge we are not capable with respect to any one thing in nature); but capable of seeing that the proof is not lost in these difficulties, nor destroyed by these objections. But then, a thorough examination into religion, with regard to these objections, which cannot be the business of every man, is a matter of pretty large compass; and, from the nature of it, requires some knowledge, as well as time and attention, to see how the evidence comes out, upon balancing one thing with another; and what upon the whole is the amount of it. Now, if persons who have picked up these objections from others, and take for granted they are of weight upon the word of those from whom they received them, or by often retailing of them come to see, or fancy they

see them to be of weight, will not prepare themselves for such an examination with a competent degree of knowledge; or will not give that attention and time to the subject, which, from the nature of it, is necessary for attaining such information: in this case, they must remain in doubtfulness, ignorance, or error; in the same way as they must with regard to common sciences and matters of common life, if they neglect the necessary means of being informed in them."

In the sense of the foregoing, men, *are*, most undoubtedly, responsible for their religious sentiments; though it has often been asserted in unmeasured and unrestricted terms, that they are not.*

If, however, a man has really used all the means within his power to convince himself of the obligations of Christianity—reading those treatises which have proved generally

* See this fallacy admirably discussed,—“Life of Dr. Mason Good,” by *Gregory*. Pp. 341-344 (1st edit. 1828).

Also, “Pascal Thoughts,” ch. vi.

satisfactory to others; acting up continually to the degree of light he has; seriously anxious to know the truth, and ready to embrace it, come from what side and under what circumstances it will, and yet, is utterly unable to realize those pleasing convictions, and that strong assurance on the subject, which others around him seem to feel and rejoice in: in such a case, of honest and regretted difficulty, let the more privileged inquirer, make for his perplexed and differing brother, as God will undoubtedly, all feeling and considerate allowance! But if there should be any one, who willingly, continues ignorant of the ordinary facts of the Christian evidence, (since these are susceptible of the same kind of proof as other facts on which we are compelled to act in all the chief affairs of life); as, such a man must, so continuing, of necessity remain (in defiance of any heights of learning in other matters) a sceptic, in religion, till the end of his days; so, *must* his condition, with reference to futurity, be perilous and unwise; “for, suppose a man to be really in doubt whether

such a person had not done him the greatest favour, or whether his whole temporal interest did not depend upon that person ; no one, who had any sense of gratitude and of prudence, could possibly consider himself in the *same* situation, with regard to such person, as if he had no such doubt. In truth, it is as just to say, that certainty and doubt are the same, as to say, the situations now mentioned would leave a man as entirely at liberty, in point of gratitude or prudence, as he would be, were he *certain* he had received no such favour from such person, or that he no way depended on him : and thus, though the evidence of religion, which is afforded to some men, should be little more than that they are given to see the system of Christianity or religion in general, to be supposable and credible ; this ought, in all reason, to beget a serious practical apprehension that it may be true. Such apprehension ought to turn men's eyes to every degree of new light which may be had, from whatever side it comes, and induce them to refrain, in the mean time, from

all immoralities, and live in the conscientious practice of every common virtue.”

With such reflections I conclude this chapter, and with it the first division of the Causes of Religious Doubt.

This *first* division has treated of those hindrances, which are chiefly *intellectual*. The *second*, or other, will be devoted to those, which may be more properly termed, *moral*.



PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

EXCESS IN SOME LEGITIMATE PROPENSITIES.

WE have hitherto confined ourselves to an examination of those causes of doubt in religious questions, which, relating chiefly to the conduct of the understanding, we have denominated *intellectual*; thus distinguishing them from that other class, which is now, in this second division, to engage our attention; and which, relating chiefly to the inclinations and the will, we purpose, in conformity with a not unusual, and very suitable distinction on this subject, to call *moral*.

In the course of the remarks which are to follow on this head, every case of difficulty not already provided for, will, it is hoped,

here receive some satisfactory explanation. If we may feel hesitation, as to which particular cause or causes here developed, the scepticism, of our friend or neighbour, may be ascribed; it is yet sanguinely anticipated that, in some part or parts of this general arrangement, our *own* present or former experience will readily present itself. The arrangement will be sufficiently complete for our general design (perhaps as complete as the nature of the subject admits of), if we can collect our disease, and the remedy, from an induction of several particulars. There are probably but few individuals whose religious difficulties originate solely in any *one* cause we have assigned. Under several general heads, we have brought together a variety of the cases most frequent in a highly refined and cultivated state of society. Some cases are described, to which many readers will trace little analogous in their own individual experience, past or present: this could not be avoided; but was essential to the comprehensive nature of our plan. Yet, if in any part, the writer shall have

succeeded in developing the origin of each of his readers scruples, he may easily hope to obtain their indulgence for the rest, which may not so immediately affect them.

The present chapter has for its chief object to point out how, notwithstanding our clearest notions of the proper *kind*, and the historic *facts* of the *evidence* of a revelation from the Deity, we may, yet never get to see nor enjoy, the conviction which ought to be the consequence of our researches, from, an undue liberty, and want of just regulation, in the indulgence of inclinations, which, under certain restrictions, are evidently natural and required.

It demands such perfect calmness, to be able to realize at all, those abstract, but most certain truths of the Deity's omnipresence; his perfect knowledge and disapprobation of what is not only bad, but forgetful; of the inevitable, and, probably, near approach of death; and the future condition of the soul,—that, it is altogether unreasonable, to expect to see the force and consequences of them, with any clearness or strength of persuasion,

without a most careful guard on every thing which is likely to divert or prejudice our attention.

“Some indeed think it possible that the world may be governed by pure intentions, and the force of argument only. But it is well said by Mr. Wilberforce, when speaking of religion, “Man is not a being of mere intellect: ‘*Video meliora proboque; deteriora sequor,*’ is a complaint which, alas! we might all of us daily use. The slightest solicitation of appetite is often able to draw us to act in opposition to our clearest judgment, our highest interests, and most resolute determination.”* How true is this remark, every day’s observation will supply, both in our own experience and that of others, most abundant proof. So extraordinary is the influence of the lower part of our nature over the clearest and most unavoidable deductions of our intellect, that, as the learned Cudworth has remarked, if even geometrical theorems

* Essay on the History of the English Government and Constitution, by *Lord John Russell*, p. 137.

were connected with offensive moral truths, they would possibly become the subjects of eternal doubt and controversy. And does not this consideration afford the true solution of such cases as that of D'Alembert, the French infidel philosopher, who, once assured Count Struensee, that, though he had "carefully examined Christianity, and found nothing against reason in it, yet, the reason why he did not adopt it was, *because he had no inward feelings of it.*" Was it likely that that talented individual *could* have any inward feelings of it? And will not Johnson's forcible remark,* on the cause of Lord Rochester's infidelity, apply with equal demonstration to the scepticism of multitudes of that class of philosophers, both in those days and at all times? It is evident to me, though I confess I did not myself, amidst the confusion of a somewhat irregular course of study and mode of life, see it so clearly formerly, that, our *wishes* are most 'prolific

* "Not finding it convenient to submit to the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, he sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity."—Lives of the Poets (*Rochester*).

fathers to our thoughts, as well in bad things as in good. I have heard it objected to religious people, that they are blinded by their prejudices in favour of their peculiar principles: but, undoubtedly, that assertion is a sword, which acts two ways; and while, from this circumstance, there is on the one hand a strong antecedent probability of gain; on the other, there is an almost moral certainty of loss.

I will endeavour briefly to illustrate this matter, by a notice of the inevitably bad effects upon the mind, of two species of indulgence, not properly restrained. The late Lord Byron (himself a melancholy* illustration, in not a few particulars, of the force of the preceding observations) has somewhere loosely remarked, "one of the two, according to your choice, woman or wine, you'll have to undergo." And this is to a certain degree true, of most, for whom I write; but, how certain the effects of either, in the sense he speaks of, on

* See a letter written by him a year or two only before he died, lamenting his irreligion and inconsistency.—*Appendix*, ii.

the conclusions of the understanding, and the religious opinions of the individual subject of them !

With reference to the former, in the sense he means, (a habit, which at first sight seems to have some foundation in the proper dictates of nature, but which, in fact, is only an injurious perversion of them),* nothing can be more fatally subversive of the clearest deductions of the reasoning faculty. The poet Burns, has a just delineation of its effects, in degrading and incapacitating the whole man. The passage is familiar to most; but I cannot resist quoting it in this place :—

“ The sacred lowe o’ weel-plac’d love
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But *never* tempt th’ *illicit* rove,
Tho’ naething should divulge it.

“ I wave the quantum o’ the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But och ! it *hardens a’ within*,
And petrifies the feeling !”

Epistle to a Young Friend.

May, 1786.

* See Appendix, iii., where the usual arguments for the *necessity* and *lawfulness* of such habits are fully obviated.

How exquisitely faithful these two last lines ! How inevitably does the practice here described, from the very nature of the sin and “hazard of concealing,” harden, all within, and *petrify* the feelings, against the force of the most conclusive arguments which Deity can afford or man propound.

I have conversed with multitudes of persons in a situation to give a just opinion, and have ever found, that precisely in the same ratio as, emerging from the restrictions of the parental roof, promiscuous intercourse with the abandoned of the other sex commenced ; voluntary religious acts, (secret devotion especially), and an abiding sense of the Deity’s presence and power declined, and *doubts* grew rapidly. And then, again, if any circumstance liberated the individual from his slavery to this propensity (unless, indeed, it was merely exchanged for some moral impediment as bad), as that individual gradually and permanently escaped the noxious influence of the brothel and its concomitants, so, the dictates of natural religion became again easy and obvious ; the habit of

secret devotion was resumed; the nature and obligations of probable evidence and moral truths unfolded themselves; and he proceeded onward to an experimental belief in Christianity. But so long as the practice here alluded to is persevered in, since Christianity plainly forbids, and natural religion confirms the inexpediency, and enlarged views of the constitution of man prove it unneeded and prejudicial,—so long as this first of Byron's "alternatives" proceeds unchecked, in defiance of such warning and such arguments—so long as the most important expectations from things not seen, but spiritual and *eternal*, are to be weighed in a balance so unfair, as a man's mind under the constantly recurring and allowed temptations to projects and pleasures of this sort, what *can* be expected, *but* doubts and difficulties, and perplexities, about matters of evidence and faith and practice, so diametrically opposed to the daily and hourly habits of such an one's mind and conduct?

The same line of argument applies with equal cogency, to that other "alternative," or

rather most frequent concomitant, which the talented but licentious Byron eulogises,—that, of *drinking*; either wholly to intoxication, or, what is perhaps more detrimental to the clear perception of religious and moral truth, an habitual system of semi-intoxication—an obliteration, by artificial stimulus, of reflections which, pursued, might end in important convictions. Could the habitual *bon vivant*, or more solitary slave to this propensity, be induced to follow out, and for a continuance, the processes of thought which open before him, in the intervals of his indulgence, the value of historic and circumstantial evidence, as opposed to demonstration, in matters of religion, would assume a very different aspect altogether; as it is ever wont, when individuals, emancipated from such habits, have set themselves disinterestedly and anxiously to inquire into them: but, if the healthy action of the brain is to be interfered with, whenever it is urging to results which Christianity sanctions, though inclination opposes, then, manifestly, Christianity has no chance whatever:

and why should we experience surprise, at the scepticism and ingenious arguments which we may hear, as the passing bottle and protracted hour stimulate the baser propensities of our companions — if happily not our own — to paradox, or tumult, or indecency, or trifling, on subjects the most confessedly serious and important.

We are now professedly engaged in searching out the causes, whatever they may be, of those doubts and difficulties which we daily hear around us, on commonly acknowledged religious questions. To have omitted the notice of the indubitable effect of an excess or irregularity in those affections of our nature, which under proper restraints are good, would have been absurd; though it is unpleasant to make statements, which, if they appear true, will not be equally approved, at least owned so, by all who read them: yet, if they point out the cause of any man's scepticism to him strongly, though he might for a while resist the inferences from, and disapprove, until he adopted a more consistent prac-

tice of, the arguments here used; if he, eventually, is helped by them to better things, the end of the writer will not be lost; and he may possibly be regarded, hereafter, with even, feelings of gratitude, by that individual.

The remarks already made under this head, on the perversion of some natural instincts, apply equally, to numerous other species of similar excess; to any thing, in fact, by which a man seeks to evade the force of natural conscience, or cheer, to the exclusion of religious considerations, the re-action and anxieties of the mind; whether it be in either of the special particulars just treated of, or whether in the still more respectable refuges of intense study or laborious occupation; in any other prejudicial pleasures of the table or society; or, the exclusive toilings of avarice or ambition. Though it is not possible to draw the precise line in these complex matters, yet, thus much is incontrovertibly affirmable: that, if either, or any variety or modification of such things be sought and persevered in, to the prejudice of our devotional feelings

and continual regard, in all times and in all places, to the Divine Author of our being, and those various important considerations immediately arising out of our connexion with and dependence on Him, then, we have no right to expect, to be permitted to see, the force of that kind of evidence, of which, alone, abstract truths and an historical religion are susceptible, however considerable and convincing to calmer observers that evidence may be.

In a word, the man who is approaching or retiring from a scene of sensuality or debauch, or engrossed in, any other such perversion of natural instinct as has here been noted, must not assuredly be surprised, if he differs widely on religious questions, from others who have their minds less irregularly excited and disturbed. Nor, need any be discomposed, by the difficulties and objections which are heard from such, though ever so talented, yet palpably prejudiced and interested, lips: on the contrary, let them *expect* to hear them; for they assuredly (though from prudential mo-

tives they may be concealed) exist in the breast of every man, who systematically and avowedly disregards, any one of the dictates of his moral and religious nature.*

“Religion cannot exist where immorality generally prevails, any more than a light can burn where the air is corrupted.” †

Thus much, on Causes of doubt, originating in the abuse of instincts, which, properly restrained, are beneficial.

* “A watch-maker told me, that a gentleman had put an exquisite watch into his hands, that went irregularly. It was as perfect a piece of work as ever was made. He took it to pieces and put it together again twenty times: no manner of defect was to be discovered, and yet the watch went intolerably. At last it struck him, that, *possibly the balance wheel might have been near a magnet*. On applying a *needle* to it, he found his suspicions true. Here was all the mischief. The steel work in the other parts of the watch had a perpetual influence on its motions; and the watch went as well as possible with a new wheel. If the soundest mind be *magnetized* by any predilection, it must act irregularly.” —Cecil.

† Sir Walter Scott's “Life of Napoleon,” vol. i. 54.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER II.

PRIDE.

AMONGST the almost infinite variety of circumstances which are fruitful in engendering and fostering doubt on religious and moral questions, an erroneous estimate of the powers of the human mind; an intense desire of originality; an almost universal scepticism; and an absence of that continual reverence and humility which, on the supposition of a presiding Deity are due to Him; are, frames of mind, too common to be met with, to be properly passed over, in this endeavour to ascertain, the fundamental causes of religious doubt.

“ That implicit credulity is a mark of a feeble mind, will not be disputed; but it may

not perhaps be as generally acknowledged, that the case is the same with unlimited scepticism : * on the contrary, we are sometimes apt to ascribe this disposition to a more than ordinary vigour of intellect. Such a prejudice was by no means unnatural at that period in the history of modern Europe, when reason first began to throw off the yoke of authority, and when it unquestionably required a superiority of understanding, as well as of intrepidity, for an individual to resist the contagion of prevailing superstition. But in the present age, in which the tendency of fashionable opinions is directly opposite to those of the vulgar, the philosophical creed, or the philosophical scepticism, of by far the greater number of those who value themselves on an emancipation from popular errors, arises from the very same weakness with the credulity of the multitude. There is, I think, good reason for hoping, that the sceptical tendency of the present age, will be only a temporary evil.

* See Appendix, iv.

While it continues, however, it is an evil of the most alarming nature." * We do unquestionably live in an age when this species of intellectual irregularity is carried to a fearful extent; and I confess that I do not see the same probability which Mr. Stewart expresses, for its speedy removal.

While every friend to independence of thought and vigorous cultivation of those faculties which God has vouchsafed us, for the best of purposes, rejoices in the present unexampled spread of opportunities, and desire of instruction; it is impossible altogether to forget the frequently quoted warnings of Pope and Bacon, on the peril of a "little learning." Truly it is too much, with the former, to insist,

"Drink deep, or *taste* not the Pierian spring."

Why, should any degree of knowledge, deep or superficial, be at all, necessarily, dangerous? In my opinion, a little knowledge

* "Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind," by *Dugald Stewart*.—Introduction, pt. ii. sec. 1.

is better than none, on points where we want it; but I yield very readily, that a little and superficial knowledge is often sought to be concealed, by startling paradoxes, and vehemence of assertion, on points which few can be deeply versed in, and which probably, from their very nature, are incapable of the fulness of explanation, the kind of proof and degree of evidence, which is presumptuously required.

The professed scepticism of young men, especially, just emerging from public schools to the universities and professions, is almost inevitably, in very great part, of this kind. Inexperienced and superficial, the most obvious method of gaining attention, is by a forcible rejection of established opinions, and an authoritative demand for explanations which, if not impossible, they are probably too unprepared and unstable to comprehend. What Bayle remarks of Des Barreaux and his friends, is true of most of them:—"They have made no deep examination; they have learned some few objections, which they are

perpetually making a noise with; they speak from a principle of ostentation, and give themselves the lie in the time of danger: vanity has a greater share in their disputes than conscience; they imagine that the singularity and boldness of the opinions which they maintain, will give them the reputation of men of parts: by degrees, they get a habit of holding impious discourses; and if their vanity be accompanied by a voluptuous life, their progress in that road is the swifter." *

That the same pride of intellect which arrays many against religion, is *commonly* accompanied by voluptuousness of life, is undoubtedly true; but, not by any means in every case, or of necessity. There may be, as there assuredly is often to be found, a calm philosophical rejection, not only of the truths of revealed, but of natural religion likewise; and the toilings of ambition to reach some coveted elevation, may also leave a man neither inclination nor leisure for those immoralities which act as hindrances to others.

* Bayle's "General Dictionary," (art. *Des Barreaux*).

Though I think it probable, that more or less, which expediency and morality and religion dissuade from, would be found at the bottom of the secret habits of most who have appeared as leaders in ranks of avowed infidelity; * yet surely, to have possibly started out of obscurity into the full dignity of public observation; out of solitude, to find oneself the head of a fondly admiring party; perhaps out of beggary, to be within the sight of certain opulence,—are these not incentives strong enough of themselves to weigh against the most assured conclusions of duty and prudence in some minds? And when, in these days, we hear of the excesses, of such as Carlile, and Owen, and Taylor, and the like,* can we find difficulty in assigning, at least, *one* cause of their profanity, to the ambition and the desire above mentioned?

The following remarks, from the pen of an eloquent writer, with especial reference to the Humes, the Voltaires, the Gibbons, the

* *Gibbon*, for instance. See Appendix, vii.

† See Appendix, vi.

D'Alemberts, and Condorcets of the last century, are no less applicable to their successors of the present, and well illustrates my general position throughout this chapter. "When Hume first bruited abroad his sophism on miracles, and was hailed by the whole grim and acrid tribe of compatriot infidelity as their undaunted leader, the legitimate successor to the vacant glories of Collins, Morgan, and Tindal—when the last honours of that lingering and bitter blood of rebellion were offered to the obscure champion, and he was saluted Atheist, on the bended knee of political economists and politicians, without name and without number—who should expect him in that exulting moment to abdicate his honours, and acknowledge that he had cheated himself? His argument on miracles was an absurdity:* if he did not discover its absurdity himself, it had been instantly discovered for him, and his acute understanding must have acquiesced at once in the proof of its absurdity. Yet, who ever heard of his giving it up, or who, if

* See Appendix, v.

Hume had lived a thousand years, would ever have heard of his giving it up? It was among the jewels of his crown! When the Voltaires, D'Alemberts, and Condorcets were riding on the topmost surge of Atheistic popularity, that surge which was so soon to be incarnadined from the veins of king and people; who could have expected from them a sudden return to that shore from which they had parted in early life? Who could imagine those proud and presumptuous minds, inflated as they were with national homage, with intellectual distinction, with the grandeur of that evil hope of overthrow which strewed crowns and sceptres beneath their future march, humbly making their way back to the lowly study of the Bible, and content to abandon all things for the truth as it is in Jesus? Or, to look to examples nearer home, who was to expect from the author of the "Rights of Man," and the "Age of Reason," a sober investigation of Christian truth? With fame, public influence, profit, the chance of **wealth**, perhaps of the highest reach of revolutionary

ambition before his eye, who could suppose Paine to sit down dispassionately to the evidences of the Gospel? Starting up from utter poverty and obscurity into the power of fatal and immeasurable mischief—a minister of contagion, rising from its march in darkness, to expand and go forth in daylight, and infect whole nations; an agent, small and subtle as a drop of poison, but like it, once in the veins, rushing with sudden pangs through the whole mighty frame of empire—was it to be supposed that this being, with the power of evil at his will, would take into his hands, but with revulsion and hate, or with the bitter thirst for more ‘waters of scorn,’ that holy covenant, whose truth must be his falsehood, and whose victory must be his shame, nakedness, and ruin?”

It is not, therefore, necessary to suppose any other, than, a desire of worldly eminence, and ambitious thirsting after popular applause, more or less connected with, those haughty misconceptions of the powers of the human intellect, and the obligation to a lowly and

meek demeanour in all things toward the Deity, which, though they may exist alone, as influential causes of unbelief, are commonly implied in that ambitious operation just delineated; it is not necessary to suppose any other than such impediments as these, to account for the religious difficulties of many who surround us. The spirit, in which such men approach the subject, is the most hopeless imaginable, for the calm, disinterested weighing of the evidence of probability.

Without supposing any of those hindrances, discussed under the first head of this division of our inquiries; even, if the most perfect abstinence from all habits of sensual and prejudicial excess were substantiated (though the individual would then be free from *that* insuperable barrier to sound and influential conviction in the evidence of religious truth); yet, if there be absent, that reverential and lowly attitude of soul, which Bacon* and the

* Ut non alius fere sit aditus ad regnum hominis, quod fundatur in scientiis, quam ad regnum cælorum, in quod nisi *sub persona infantis*, intrare non datur.—*Nor. Org.* i. 68.

inimitable Pascal* so continually urge on us as indispensable, which, so pre-eminently distinguished the whole career of the immortal Newton,† and other kindred spirits, as acute in their investigation of divine things as of the world of nature; if this chief dictate, of the most elementary views of sacred obligations (of any thing short of Atheism), be not sedulously attended to; if it be true, that one of the most valuable effects of genuine philosophy is, to remind us of the limited powers

* See the chapter in his 'Thoughts.'—"For what reasons we may presume it has pleased God to hide himself from some, and to disclose himself to others,"—which abounds with forcible injunctions of this kind.

† The marked solemnity of manner with which Newton ever accompanied even the mention of the name of the Deity, is proverbial. The following gives also a beautiful idea of the immensely elevated lowliness and humility of that great man's mind. "I know not what the world will think of my labours; but to myself, it seems, that I have been but as a *child playing on the sea shore*; now finding some pebble rather more polished, and now some shell more agreeably variegated, while the immense ocean of truth extended itself *unexplored* before me."—Library of Useful Knowledge, "*Life of Newton.*" p. 37.

of the human understanding, and yet this limitation is constantly forgotten; if startling and conceited paradoxes are the only means by which an individual can hope to gain public attention (which attention he is yet resolved to gain, at all hazards),—if, to differ from so many of the best and wisest, on a subject fraught with the happiest consequences, be not a source of regret, but rather of boastful exultation, then, it will hardly be thought, that such an one, however externally correct, and respectable, and clever in other things, is likely to see the value, and submit to the lowly requirements, of Christianity. It may, with greater probability, be surmised, that, as God has doubtless afforded “a due proportion of light for those who, above all things, wish that they may see; so, there will also be a proper mixture of *shade* to those who are of a contrary disposition.”*

* Pascal.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER III.

WANT OF ADEQUATE SERIOUSNESS.

BESIDES those various impediments, which have been developed in the course of the two preceding chapters, there are yet several others, more or less of a moral kind, which it may be useful briefly to set forth, in order to render our enumeration as complete and comprehensive, and therefore likely in some point or other to meet the peculiarity of the scepticism of as many, as possible, in these most important of all subjects of human investigation.

Under the present head, I desire to make a few remarks on the decidedly prejudicial effects of that habit of playful banter, and witticism, and joke, which some have almost unconsciously contracted, with reference to religious persons and religious things, in fill-

ing the mind with inadequate ideas of God, and his designs towards mankind.

This is by no means the habit of all who are opposed to the truths of Revelation; far from it: whatever may be the hindrances of many in these matters, with frivolity or trifling, it would be in the highest degree unjust to charge them; but it is, assuredly, not an uncommon occurrence, to meet with men much otherwise disposed, who, though not declaredly hostile to the generally admitted truths either of natural religion or of Christianity, are yet so singularly and uncontrollably given to a spirit of witticism and levity on these subjects, that it is utterly impossible for a reflecting person to give them credit for any sincerity in their religious profession; or, expect otherwise, on a minuter inquiry, than, to find them at heart as decided sceptics, as any others.

Such levity on a subject so momentous, in whomsoever it is found, is ever inconsistent with a really religious frame of mind; for, as no one ever either feels himself disposed to

pleasantry, or capable of being diverted with the pleasantry of others, upon matters in which he is deeply interested; so a mind intent upon the acquisition of heaven, rejects, with indignation, every attempt to entertain it with jests, calculated to degrade or deride subjects which it never recollects but with seriousness and anxiety. Nothing but stupidity, or the most frivolous dissipation of thought, can make even the inconsiderate forget the supreme importance of every thing which relates to the expectation of a future existence. Whilst the infidel mocks at the superstitions of the vulgar, insults over their credulous fears, their childish errors or fantastic rites; it does not occur to him to observe, that the most preposterous device by which the weakest devotee ever believed he was securing the happiness of a future life, is more rational than unconcern about it. Upon this subject, nothing is so absurd as indifference; no folly so contemptible as thoughtlessness and levity.*

* *Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.* Book v. ch. 9.

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* *Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy.* Book v. ch. 9.

And though, in the midst of such inconsiderateness, there may be no real, as there is seldom anything, of argument, yet is a facility in such, often mistaken for argument, and the worst consequences result to others; while the individual himself, from often joking on serious subjects, at last gets to view them as lightly as he seems to do. And it is, I think, manifestly supposable, that from such an one, no less than from the sensual and the presumptuous, the Divine Author of such a revelation as the Christian, would rather suffer the force of its evidence to lie obscured, until, it was approached, in a more suitable and serious attitude of attention.

I again repeat, that many who are hedged in with difficulties and doubts in religion, are in no wise chargeable with the error and consequences just described; but, it is certain many are, for whose scepticism, excepting in this, we are at a loss to assign any other palpable reason whatsoever. It was, therefore, not superfluous, amongst others, thus briefly to notice it in this place.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER IV.

FEAR.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, in the latter of those two sensible discourses, which though written only in the first instance for the eye of a private friend, he afterwards allowed to be printed, has some remarks so strong and strikingly illustrative of the point to be urged in the present chapter, that, as usefulness, rather than originality, is my object in this undertaking, I gladly here venture to incorporate them; and feelingly subscribe, from my own experience, to their great truth.

“It is from the fear of ridicule, a fear so much engrafted on our nature, that many shrink with apprehension from the laugh of scorers, who could refute their arguments,

resist their example, and defy their violence. There never has been an hour, or age, in which this formidable weapon has been more actively employed against the Christian faith than our own day. Wit and ridicule have formed the poignant sauce with which infidels have seasoned their abstract reasoning, and voluptuaries the swinish messes of pollution, which they have spread unblushingly before the public. It is a weapon suited to the character of the apostate spirit himself, such as we conceive him to be—loving nothing, honouring nothing, feeling neither the enthusiasm of religion nor of praise; but striving to debase all that is excellent, and degrade all that is noble and praiseworthy, by cold irony and contemptuous sneering. There is also an unhappy desire in our corrupt nature to approve of audacity even in wickedness, as men chiefly applaud those feats of agility which are performed at the risk of the artist's life. And such is the strength and flippancy of this unhallowed temptation, that there are perhaps few, who have not at one time or

other fallen into the snare, and laughed at that at which they ought to have trembled.”*

I make no apology for the length of this quotation, for surely it is drawn by a master hand, and founded on the most accurate observations of human nature!

“We have laughed when we ought to have trembled!” and “shrunk with apprehension from the laugh of those whose arguments we might have refuted!”—and if it be so, why shall we complain, if our own minds, thus shrinking with fears so unworthy, are encumbered by difficulties, which a more manly decision would never have suffered to approach us. Is it probable that the Almighty will vouchsafe more light to those who so ill use what they have? Is it not rather supposable that that will be altogether withdrawn, which is so much and so unworthily abused?

Most important is it, that the subject of the present chapter be ever well remembered, in estimating the Causes of Religious Doubt.

* “Religious Discourses,” by a Layman, p. 60. Colburn, 1828.

No cause is more fearful, and yet none is less suspected or more forgotten. It accounts for an infinity of lurking scepticism, which it surprises the casual observer to see, in individuals who have made much inquiry, and to whom the tyro in these investigations may be disposed rather to look for support and guidance; but if, instead of support, he perceives in him a shrinking, a timidity, so unlike the confidence which a firm belief in the principles he professes should naturally inspire, is he not forced to the conclusion that the professor is scarcely, if at all, less of a doubter than himself? and who shall rightly estimate the injury done by each recurring instance of this kind, both to the individual's own future welfare, and that of those who had a right to look up to him for help?

It is not necessary to be a Christian, to incur ridicule. The Deist, if true to his principles; a man of upright morals, with his appetites in tolerable subjection, of an humble and serious and devotional spirit towards God, must expect the same. Some who profess

and call themselves Christians richly deserve, by the extravagancies which they have heaped upon and appended to Christianity, all the satire with which they are and have been visited; but yet, it is impossible for the most consistent believer in Christianity imaginable, if he acts on his belief, to avoid, some degree, of ridicule; in the same way, and for the same reasons, as it is impossible for the Deist to avoid it, if he acts up to the just inferences from his belief in the truths of natural religion.

That which excites the hostility and the ridicule of a large portion of mankind, is, what is common alike both to Deism and Christianity; namely, the obligations under which they place the consistent believer in either, to act with such a continual reference to a presiding Deity, and a future existence, as checks the frivolity, the recklessness, or the independent vanity of many of those among whom they live. Indeed, I am not aware that any arguments have been adduced, throughout this work, to account for the existence of doubts respecting Christianity, which apply

not equally to Deism. The admissions of Deism, even if they be not considered as extending beyond the simple acknowledgment of a supreme moral administrator of the universe, seem to demand a conduct as pure and guarded and circumspect as Christianity. If the fear of ridicule keeps a man back from an uncompromising and consistent profession of either, he must certainly prepare himself, sooner or later, if he ever thinks at all, to be hedged in with an infinity of objections and hesitations about both.

CONCLUSION.

THE object of the preceding observations has been, to clear the way, before an unprejudiced inquirer into the evidences of revelation; and bring him, to the entrance, of that tranquil region of belief, where, it has been supposed he has been willing, if he could be convinced it was his duty, in company with many whom, though he has loved and venerated, he has never yet been able, cordially to proceed.

It has been shewn, that, misconceptions as to the *nature of the proof*, in questions of this sort, lie at the root of some men's difficulties; and a want of adequate acquaintance with the history and *facts* of Christianity, at the root of those of many more; it was shewn, that if the *natural appetites* be not kept in a certain degree of very rigid subjection; or, if there be any forgetfulness of the extreme limitation of

our faculties, and the obligation to a *pervading sense of Deity*, in all our investigations; if there be any *want of seriousness*; or even, if the *dread of singularity* lead us to a practical renunciation of any of the great truths, even of natural religion (so called); in either, or any combination of these cases, we have enough to account for many apparently insuperable doubts and obstructions in the way of a realizing view of any revelation which the Deity might be pleased to make us. Some few specific difficulties, of a modern and urgent kind, are treated at length in the Appendix.*

Considering the almost infinite variety in the peculiar constitution of the mind of different individuals, and the circumstances amidst which they have been trained, it is too much to expect, that all the difficulties which may occur have been fully obviated; but, if a large portion, have been as fully met, as the nature of them seems well to admit of, may it not be easily inferred, how readily, if there

* See Appendix, Nos. viii., xi., xii., xv., xvi., i., ii., iii., iv., vi., xix., &c.

had been more space, and more ability in the author, all others of a similar character might have been as easily alleviated also?

To discuss the body of the Christian evidence, has not been the object of this work; on the contrary, it has been carefully avoided, as an inquiry, perfectly distinct from this preparatory one. Yet, it is now, the sanguine wish of the author of these pages, that, all his attentive readers are prepared to enter vigorously into this needful examination. If any have ever done so, without satisfaction, before; he is, now, full of hope, that, bearing in mind the various mazes pointed out in the foregoing, and into one or more of which it is probable he may have wandered—bearing in mind, especially, those frequent causes of uncertainty and confusion delineated in the course of the *second* division of these observations; he will at last arrive, at as peaceful, and considering the peculiar nature of the subject, as unclouded a conviction, as, notwithstanding an unusual degree of former wandering and anxiety, now, and for several years, has filled the breast of the author of these pages.

If what is here written, be understood, at all to supersede, an attentive study of the evidences of revelation, a most grievous error will be contracted. In proportion to a man's difficulties, such, in some measure, must be the extent of his inquiries; though, as has been hinted, the removal of some obstructing and prejudice-exciting cause, is often sufficient in itself to allay a host of cavils. To give all the aid in his power to such investigations, has been the author's object in several lists * which are appended to this volume.

The following rapid sketch, abridged from an essay by an excellent living writer, may afford some general idea of the line of inquiry to be pursued.

Christianity claims a divine origin. I have therefore a right, indeed I am *bound*, soberly and impartially, to inquire what proofs she brings of this high claim. And when she refers me to the Holy Scriptures, as containing all her records, I have a right to ask what evidence there is of the genuineness and

* See Appendix, xiii.

authenticity of these books, and what footing they place the religion upon which they wish to inculcate upon mankind? The answer to all these questions is found, in what we call the *external evidences* of Christianity. These shew the acknowledged facts on which the religion rests. They prove that the *books* were written by the persons whose names they bear, and do contain a true and *credible history*. They prove that the Revelation itself was founded on unequivocal and numerous *miracles*; that it was accompanied (as it is accompanied still) with the distinct fulfilment of an amazing scheme of *prophecy*, embracing all the chief events of the world; and that it was *propagated* in the face of opposition and difficulty with a triumphant success, which nothing but the hand of God could have effected. These evidences also shew, the positive *good effects* produced by this heavenly doctrine, and which are still being produced in the melioration of society, and the advancement of human happiness and virtue, in all nations where it has been received.

When the *outward* credentials of the heavenly messenger have once been investigated, and the message been received on this its proper footing, then, if it be asked whether the contents of the Revelation seem to confirm the proof of its divine original—whether the sincere believer will find them adapted to his wants—whether the morals inculcated, the end proposed, the means enjoined, are agreeable to man's best reason and the dictates of an enlightened understanding and conscience—whether the character of Christ be worthy of his religion—whether the influence of grace, said to accompany Christianity, may be obtained by prayer—whether the lives and deaths of Christians, as compared with those of professed Infidels, illustrate the excellency of their faith;—whether, in short, the promises and blessings of Christianity are verified in those who make a trial of them, by submitting to the means appointed for their attainment? We answer, by referring to the Internal Evidences of Revelation.

These *internal evidences*, are now our appropriate study. They shew us the adaptation of the religion to the situation and wants of man—the purity and sublimity of its doctrines and precepts—the character of its Founder—the sanctifying and consoling effect of the influence which accompanies it—the holy lives and happy deaths of its genuine followers, and the trial which every one may make of its promises, by fulfilling the terms on which they are proposed.

Still, after we have sincerely embraced the Gospel, we may humbly inquire, whether the difficulties which are raised against it by unbelievers, or which occur to our own minds, may not be relieved by an appeal to the works of God in nature, and His order and government therein. This is the *argument from analogy*, which rises still a step above the two preceding branches of the subject, not as in itself necessary to the first reception of Christianity, but as furnishing the subsequent confirmation of it.

The force of the *external evidences* is, to

compel assent; the effect of the *internal*, to produce love; the chief efficacy of the *analogical*, to silence objections. By the first, a message is proved to come from heaven; by the second, the salutary effects of this message are felt and understood; by the third, it is shewn to be in itself most agreeable to all the known dispensations of its Author. The first is the proper evidence which such a case indispensably demands; the next confirms by actual experience this satisfactory ground of belief; the last excludes all contradictory assertions, and creates a silence and repose of mind, when objections are urged by others, or arise in our own thoughts. When these things have been well weighed and seriously examined, with a careful heed to those impediments which it has been the object of this volume to pourtray, we have then, no fears whatever for the result. We do not promise a cloudless conviction,* for of that

* "Let men, therefore, reproach us no more with the want of perfect light, for we profess ourselves to want it; but let them own the power and truth of

no matter of this kind is susceptible, but we do promise enough, abundantly enough, to *act* on; and can venture surely to prognosticate, that in proportion as a man gets fairly under the influence of these things, he will find himself a happier being than he probably at this moment has any idea of; * and that, by means of that all-pervading law, of *habit* (looking up, of course, to God for guidance), he shall, *gradually*, be enabled to reach, a most pleasing solidity of conviction, and a power of acting with a continual reference to the dictates of sound philosophy; of realizing the truths of which the head is sure, and making the heart to love and to obey them; an in-

Religion in its very obscurity,—in that mixture of darkness which surrounds us, and that indifference which we find in ourselves towards the knowledge of it.”—*Pascal*.

* See a magnificent passage on this general subject, from “The Course of Time,” a poem, in ten Books, by *Robert Pollock*. Appendix, xiv.

See also, “Pascal’s Thoughts,” ch. 8 (“Portrait of a man who has wearied himself with searching after God by his bare reason, and who begins to search the Scriptures”).

creasing freedom from gloomy apprehensions, and recurring, though oft-exploded, doubts; more and more of the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

It will be an unspeakable satisfaction to him to find, that* a supernatural influence upon the intellect and passions, in answer to persevering prayer,† is one of the clearest promises of the Sacred Writings, to aid him in his oft baffled and unstable resolutions. "A sceptic who yields to the powerful proofs

* See this subject *philosophically* considered in *Locke's* "Reasonableness of Christianity," p. 103, vol. iv. *Watson's Collection of Tracts*.

Burnet's "Account of Lord Rochester," p. 42, Bayne's ed. 1820.

These two passages from Locke and Burnet, are given in Appendix, xv.

See also "Natural History of Enthusiasm," ch. iii.

Shephard's "Thoughts on Devotion," ch. vii.

Davies's "Estimate of the Human Mind," vol. ii. concluding chapter.

"A Dissertation on the Nature and Advantages of the Influence of the Holy Spirit," by *W. C. Walters, Esq.*—ch. i. sec. 1; ch. ii. sec. 4.

† For a full discussion of the question of the *efficacy of prayer*, see Appendix, xvi.

of revelation, will, for a long time, experience a most painful discordance between his judgment and the associations which unbelief has produced. When most earnest in the contemplation of Christian truth, when endeavouring to bring home its comforts to the heart, the imagination will suddenly revolt, and cast the whole among the rejected notions. This is, indeed, a natural consequence of infidelity, which mere reasoning is not able to remove. Nothing but humble *prayer* can, indeed, obtain that faith which, when reason and sound judgment have led us to supernatural truth, gives to unseen things the body and substance of reality.*

The celebrated Algernon Sidney, in his "Discourses concerning Government," has a passage which seems to me clearly to explain this singular contrariety. Quoting that passage of the New Testament, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," &c., he remarks, "These are the fruits of *our corrupted nature*,

* "Internal Evidence against Catholicism." By *Blanco White*, p. 18 (2d ed.).

which the apostle observing, does not only make a difference between the natural and the spiritual man, whose proceeding can only be referred to God, and that only as far as he is guided by his spirit; but shews, that the natural man is in a perpetual enmity against God, without any possibility of being reconciled to Him, unless by the destruction of the old man, and the regenerating or renewing him through the spirit of grace." *

This, if true, which I think it is, is certainly an important consideration; and, as the profound Pascal † has well observed, has been too much neglected by most writers on the evidences of Christianity.

When the Bible has been ascertained to convey a revelation from the Deity, let not the inquirer be easily cast down by the diffi-

* "Discourses concerning Government," by *Algernon Sidney*, ch. ii. sec. 8.

† "Pascal Thoughts," ch. xx. "That God is not known to advantage, but through Jesus Christ." One of the most original and striking chapters in that remarkable work.

culties of various kinds,* which may meet him there. Many things he will understand as he becomes more familiar and more deeply versed in matters of this kind. He may be assured that the Author of that revelation will not permit him, if sincere, to err in any thing which is essential to his welfare. Amidst the conflicting opinions and interpretations he may be doomed to hear, let him remember that life is short, and that he must, through these oppositions, frame his course as best he may; and since he cannot agree with all, cast in his lot with him who seems to have the greatest probability on his side. This is all a man can do, constituted as the world is; and if he does it in prayer and godly sincerity, he cannot be much wrong eventually. Only, let him be diligent. “We know the attention bestowed by men of learning upon human laws, and how long a portion of their time must be devoted to study, ere they can term themselves acquainted with the municipal laws of any civilised realm: and is it then to be

* See Appendix, xviii. of “Scripture Difficulties.”

imagined that the laws of the Supreme are to be understood at a slighter expense of leisure than those of earthly legislators?" *

Let him be diligent, and emulate the praise which Locke so handsomely bestows on Sir Isaac Newton in *this* particular.† Such industry, in such a man, in such a cause, as well as in those others where he so transcendantly excelled, and the unfeigned humility which was united in him, with such independence of thought, and exquisite sagacity, are all worthy of attentive heed in days, when similar boldness and industry in the world of nature, are too frequently characterized by a spirit the most dissimilar from his, in the world of grace.‡

Yet, is the author of these pages fully san-

* *Walter Scott*, in "Discourses by a Layman," p. 64.

† "Mr. Newton is really a very valuable man, not only for his wonderful skill in mathematics; but in divinity too, and his *great knowledge* of the Scriptures, wherein I know few his equals." Letter from Locke to P. King, afterwards Lord Chancellor, 1703. See *Lord King's Life*.

‡ See Appendix, xix. "Science and Revelation."

guine, that the present spirit of inquiry and close scrutiny which is abroad, will make those who do become religious, so, in earnest; —that, while “unsanctified science is losing itself in a labyrinth of second causes, frittering down knowledge into vain disputations, and involving itself in the folds of circular reason,”—the Christianity of the days of the Reformation will be more and more apprehended, and a more spiritual as well as intellectual religion go hand in hand together.

Imperfect as the foregoing sketch has been, the author, yet dares to hope, it may not be unavailing, towards the relief of the difficulties of many sincere inquirers; and, largely increase their happiness, both, in time and in eternity.

APPENDIX :

CONTAINING

**A FULLER EXAMINATION OF SOME PARTICULAR
POINTS, QUOTATIONS AT LENGTH,
LISTS OF BOOKS, &c. &c.**

APPENDIX.

I.

NATURAL RELIGION.

CORRECTLY speaking, there is no such thing as *natural religion*.

Though the expression is convenient, when speaking of those religious truths which are not peculiar to Christianity, it is yet important to remember, that, all *natural religion* (or Deism, as it is sometimes called) is *matter of pure and certain revelation*. There is no hint whatever in the history of mankind, that the truths of Deism were first reasoned out; nor is there sufficient ground to believe they ever could have been, without a revelation, as I think the following from Soame Jenyns unanswerably proves:—

“Some have been so bold, as to strike at the root of all revelation from God, by asserting that it is incredible, because unnecessary; and unnecessary, because the reason which he has bestowed on mankind

is sufficiently able to discover all the religious and moral duties which he requires of them, if they would but attend to her precepts, and be guided by her friendly admonitions. Mankind have undoubtedly, at various times, from the remotest ages, received so much knowledge by divine communications, and have ever been so much inclined to impute it all to their own sufficiency, that it is now difficult to determine what human reason, unassisted, can effect. But to form a true judgment on the subject, let us *turn our eyes to those remote regions of the globe to which this supernatural assistance has never yet been extended*, and we shall there see men endued with sense and reason not inferior to our own, so far from being capable of forming systems of religion and morality, that they are at this day totally unable to make a nail or hatchet; and from whence we may surely be convinced, that *reason alone is so far from being sufficient to offer to mankind a perfect religion, that it has never yet been able to lead them to any degree of culture or civilization whatever. These have uniformly flowed from that great fountain of divine communication opened in the east, in the earliest ages, and thence gradually diffused in sublimous streams throughout the various regions of the earth.* Their rise and progress may easily be traced backward to their source; and wherever these have not as yet been able to penetrate, we there find the human species

not only void of all true religious and moral sentiments, but not the least emerged from their original ignorance and barbarity; which seems a *demonstration* that although human reason is capable of progression in science, yet the first foundations must be laid by supernatural instruction; for surely no other probable cause can be assigned why one part of mankind should have made such an amazing progress in religious, moral, metaphysical, and philosophical inquiries,—such wonderful improvements in policy, legislation, commerce and manufactures,—while the other part, formed with the same natural capacities, and divided only by seas and mountains, should remain during the same number of ages in a state little superior to brutes; without government, without laws or letters, and even without clothes and habitations;—murdering each other to satiate their revenge, and devouring one another to appease their hunger: I say, no cause can be assigned for this amazing difference, except that the first have received information from those divine communications recorded in the Scriptures, and the latter have never yet been favoured with such assistance.”—*View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, by Soame Jenyns, p. 115, 2d edit.

Butler, has also, an excellent passage to the same effect, which I own, afforded immense relief to my own mind when first I met with it, harassed and worn

out with attempts to establish the great elementary truths of religion and morality on the foot of my own reason; for, long after I became thoroughly convinced of the truth of revelation, the difficulties which may be urged in the way of these, often exceedingly perplexed me when I turned my thoughts to the abstract proofs of them. I now see, distinctly, that although such works as "Dr. Paley's Theology," and the like, are invaluable after the facts are once *known*, they must not be insisted on, as incapable of strong objections, on the part of those whose metaphysical turn of mind incline them to dispute them.

No man can be a greater advocate than myself for freedom of inquiry, the banishment of superstition of all kinds, and who rejoices more in the present vigour with which intellectual processes are urged on; but, it seems to me evident, that, *whether or no reason could, it had never had opportunity, of first reasoning out, the truths of what is commonly called Deism.* And though I by no means undervalue (no one can more delight in), as *illustrations*, those admirable treatises before alluded to; I own, that as independent *proofs* on these subjects, they never would bring any sound, comfortable conviction to my mind, even when I was most anxious that they should, and earnestly trying to persuade myself that they did. I apprehend, Mr. Jenyns' preceding argument contains the

true solution of the matter; and that the following from Butler confirms it:—

“ 1. Somewhat of this system,” (natural religion) “ with more or fewer additions and alterations, hath been professed in all ages or countries, of which we have any certain information relating to this matter.

“ 2. It is certain historical fact, so far as we can trace things up, that this whole system of belief (that there is one God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world, and that mankind is in a state of religion) was received in the first ages; and

“ 3. As there is *no hint or intimation in history, that this system was first reasoned out*; so there is express historical or traditional evidence, as ancient as history, that it *was first taught by revelation*.”—*Analogy*, pt. ii., ch. 6.*

* See also, the “*Reasonableness of Christianity*,” by Mr. Locke (pp. 91-100 in Vol. iv. Watson’s Collection of Tracts).

Summer’s “*Records of the Creation*,” vol i. p. x-xiii.

“*The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature*,” (a masterly treatise), by John Ellis.

“ True religion is the true worship and service of God, learnt and believed, from the word of God only. No man or angel can know how God would be worshipped and served, *unless God reveal it*. He hath revealed and taught it us, in the Holy Scriptures, by

II.

LORD BYRON.

(Part 2d, chap. i.)

IN November, 1821, a gentleman who had then recently discovered among the papers of his deceased wife a singularly beautiful prayer, composed by her, with reference to Lord Byron's well-known scepticism, thinking it might interest his Lordship, transmitted it to him, then at Pisa, immersed in occupations and amusements which, briefly to glance at, are reason enough for the scepticism of any man. When we for one moment seriously reflect on these, we shall not ask why he did *not*, but how it was possible he *could*, believe;—living in adulterous intercourse with the Guiccioli—in mid career of his licentious Don Juan—his habits otherwise immoral and unrestrained :* Hunt

inspired ministers; and in the Gospel, by his own Son and his Apostles."—*Milton's Treatise of True Religion*.

* For instance, see Galt's Account of the drunken excess which concluded the day of the burning of poor Shelley's remains: "Soon after this, when the duty was done, and the ashes collected, they dined, and drank much together; and bursting from the calm mastery with which they had repressed their feelings during the solemnity, gave way to frantic exultation. *They were all drunk*; they sang, they shouted, and their barouche was driven like a whirlwind through the forest."—*Galt's Life of Byron*, p. 258.

just arrived, in conjunction with himself and the wretched Shelley, to plan and set on foot the short-lived and disgraceful "Liberal;" we are not surprised to hear such a man, so situated, endeavouring to defend his unbelief by such trite and nonsensical arguments as are to be found in the following *answer* of Lord Byron to Mr. Sheppard's letter, written in the very height of the tumult of the circumstances above named.

It is surely scarcely too much to say; that, humanly speaking, had it not been for such *impediments*, Byron had been a Christian on conviction; he evidently saw it was desirable, and not unreasonable; but the "deteriora sequor" was too strong for him.

LORD BYRON TO MR. SHEPPARD.

"Pisa, December 8, 1821.

"SIR,

"I have received your letter. I need not say, that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite sure that it was intended by the writer for me; yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances which you mention, render the allusion probable. But, for whomsoever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so

Interesting! unhappy Byron! how does this letter, written in some calm reflecting hour, amidst that sensual, degrading life you then were leading, unfold to us, a prospect of better things; but alas! a slighted God cut short, as with Shelley, too, so late before, indignant, his day of grace.

“He died! he died of what? of wretchedness;
Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame; drank early, deeply drank, drank draughts
That common millions might have quenched; then died
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink!
His goddess nature, wooed, embraced, enjoyed,
Fell from his arms, abhorred; his passions died;
Died all, but dreary, solitary pride;
And all his sympathies in being, died.
As some ill-guided bark, well built and tall,
With angry tides cast out on desert shore,
And then retiring, left it there to rot
And moulder in the winds and rains of heaven;—
So he, cut from the sympathies of life,
And cast ashore from pleasure’s boisterous surge,
A wandering, weary, worn, and wretched thing,
Scorched and desolate, and blasted soul,
A gloomy wilderness of dying thought—
Repined, and groaned, and withered from the earth.
His groanings filled the land his numbers filled,
And yet he seemed ashamed to groan. Poor man!
Ashamed to beg, and yet he needed help.”

Pollok’s Course of Time, Book iv.

III.

FORNICATION.

(p. 47.)

SINCE the injurious consequences, of a promiscuous sexual intercourse are so many, it would seem rather to impugn the goodness of the Deity, were there no provision against the necessity of it. That such a provision *exists*, is therefore indubitable; and it is thus stated by one of the profoundest searchers into the laws which regulate our nature.

“De eo vero valde dubito, an et unquam in homine sano genuinum semen ex vesiculis resorbeatur, &c. Longe aliam potius eo fine homini (et quidem quantum hactenus novi nulli præter eum alii animanti) concessam esse prærogativam probabile videtur, *pollutionum nocturnarum*, quas eatenus ad *naturales* viri excretiones* refero, ut iisdem rarius frequentiusve pro temperamenti

* *Ch. R. Jaenisch* “De Pollutione Nocturna.” Gotting. 1795. 4to.

Aug. Gottl. Richter, “Specielle Therapie,” vol. iv., p. 552, sq.

C. W. Hufeland, “Abhandl der Königl Akademik der Wisseuch, in Berlin, 1819. p. 170.

nempe et constitutionis varietate a molesto et alias urgente superfluo semine liberetur.

“Facilis dabo barbaras gentes temperamenti phlegmatici et quibus concubitus vagus est, ista excretionem haud indigere, eam vero e juvene cælebe, sanguineo, succi pleno, phantasia vividioris excellenti, vitæ genere lautioris utente, cæteroquin sanitate sibi propria perfectissima gaudente, referendam esse puto.”—*Blumenbach's "Physiology,"* § 532, and note; see *Dr. Elliotson's* admirable translation, with notes.

Here, then, is evidently, the adequate* natural provision for the unmarried person, as well as, the married under particular circumstances. There is, doubtless, a preponderance of advantage in most cases, in favour of the married state, in order to secure the perpetuation of our species; but there is, manifestly, an ample, sinless provision, *out* of it; for the prevention of those habits of irregular indulgence, so deteriorating to the individual, prejudicial to society in general, and uncompromisingly interdicted by the divine author of our religion. The married state, though possessing, to most, numerous advantages, is not therefore, in the least, *necessary* to *any*. It is a natural institution, intended to answer a most important end; but since all are not in a situation

* And hence, the sinfulness of *every other*, which man's depravity might devise; as, the Heathen abominations; self-pollution, and all such like.

to engage in it,* so soon as they become constitutionally fitted for it, it was to be expected from the universal goodness and wisdom of the Deity, that some adequate provision would be made against any inconvenience which might be the result of such unavoidable hindrances; and accordingly, we find, there *is* such provision.

But since the inferior part of our nature is so easily roused into irregular excess, and incentives of every kind lie so importunately at hand, it is not perhaps to be expected, that such a species of homely demonstration, as the foregoing, will be unanimously admitted.†

* When the private *habits and expenses* of most single men are considered, it may not be too much to say, that nine out of ten of these, would be *richer* men at the end of the year, if married, than they are *now*. This is not the place for enlarging on this position; and, after all, ambition, unsteadiness, inclination, and the like, are formidable opponents to the simple reason and *philosophy of a case*, however clear. In an immense proportion of cases, however, the above assertion would, I am persuaded, fully hold; and men be found, on all sides, to bear practical testimony to its truth.

† As an ingenious writer has wittily inquired,—“If the Pythagorean proposition, for instance (Euclid i. 47), were to impose on mathematicians the Pythagorean maxim of a strict vegetable diet, what carnivorous student of geometry would ever get to the end of the

When we set ourselves to find objections to what, though ever so demonstrably true, makes against our inclinations, it is easy indeed to meet them. But viewing the question of this note as a matter of calm philosophical inquiry, apart from any of those "wishes which are often such unworthy" fathers to our thoughts; as an unrestrained liberty in the sexual instinct has been already evinced, a fatal detriment in religious and moral investigations, indisposing the attention for, and dimming and distorting the effect of evidence, checking devotional feelings, and generating a host of prejudices, as unphilosophical as interested on one side of the question; so, it has now been shewn, that the habits which lead to this are not, in the slightest degree, warranted by expediency; that there is a natural and most ample provision against them; and that thus, the voice of reason and revelation, perfectly coincide.*

first book of Euclid? Or if we could conceive the doctrine of fluxions had, somehow or other, been combined with an obligation to abstain from the use of wine, does any one believe that it would have gained its present undisputed establishment throughout the scientific world? Should we not, at this very day, have many a thirsty analyst, protesting that he was under an absolute inability to comprehend, or to credit the system?"

* *Why* it is so difficult to *act* upon, the clearest con-

I subjoin two invaluable passages on this general subject, which I am sure my readers will thank me for detaching and presenting here. The first, an abstract from the acute and sagacious Paley, on the *general consequences* of the practice. The other, from the account which Burnet published, of his conversations with Lord Rochester, on the proper limits of gratification in our natural propensities. In the course of these will be found many suggestions, which I have, for this reason, designedly omitted in the foregoing.

1. The first and great mischief, and by consequence, the guilt of promiscuous concubinage, consists (writes Paley), in its *tendency to diminish marriages, and thereby to defeat the several beneficial purposes enumerated in the preceding chapter*.—(Chap. i., part iii., Mor. & Pol. Philoa.), which see. Promiscuous concubinage discourages marriage, by abating the chief temptation to it. The male part of the species will not undertake the encumbrance, expense, and restraint of married life, if they can gratify their passions at a cheaper price; and

viction from such an argument as the foregoing, is purely a *religious* question. The reasons of it, and a remedy, are to be found on a close examination of the tenor of the Christian revelation; but to discuss these, is not the object here; they are briefly hinted at in the concluding chapter, of the body of this work.

they will undertake any thing rather than not gratify them.

The reader will learn to comprehend the magnitude of this mischief, by attending to the importance and variety of the uses to which marriage is subservient; and by recollecting withal, that the malignity and moral quality of each crime is *not to be estimated by the particular effect of one offence, or of one person offending*, but by the general tendency and consequence of crimes of the same nature. The libertine may not be conscious that these irregularities hinder his own marriage, from which he is deterred, he may allege, by different considerations; much less does he perceive how *his* indulgences can hinder other men from marrying; but *what* will he say, *would be the consequence, if the same licentiousness were universal?* Or what should hinder its becoming universal, if it be innocent or allowable in him?

2. *Fornication supposes prostitution*, and prostitution brings and leaves the victim of it to almost certain misery. It is no small quantity of misery in the aggregate, which, between want, disease, and insult, is suffered by those outcasts of human society, who infest populous cities; the whole of which is a *general consequence* of fornication, and to the increase and continuance of which, *every act and instance of fornication contributes*.

3. *Fornication produces habits of ungovernable lewd-*

ness, which introduce the more aggravated crimes of seduction, adultery, violation, &c. Likewise (however it be accounted for) the criminal converse of the sexes corrupts and depraves the mind and moral character more than any single species of vice whatsoever. That ready perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive resolution against it, which constitutes a virtuous character, is *seldom found in persons addicted to these indulgences*. They prepare an easy admission for every sin that seeks it; are in *low life*, usually, the first stage in men's progress to the most desperate villainies; and in *high life*, to that lamented dissoluteness of principle, which manifests itself in a profligacy of public conduct, and a contempt of the obligations of religion and of moral probity.* Add to this, that habits of libertinism incapacitate and indispose the mind for all intellectual, moral, and religious pleasures; which is a great loss to any man's happiness.

4. Fornication *perpetuates a disease*, which may be accounted one of the sorest maladies of human nature;

* The perpetual fear of detection and of disease, in which they live; the falsehoods, to account for absences and disease when taken; and the dishonest means, to which recourse is often had, to pay or maintain the object, and meet the various consequences of such habits, are things which, amongst others, must, inevitably, in whether high or low, deteriorate and *debase* the character.

and the effects of which are said to visit the constitution of even distant generations.

Nor, may it be added, are there *any* circumstances, however favourable, under which the *keeping of a mistress* can be considered as defensible, or "the *same thing* as marriage;" for

1. "If the situation of the parties be the same thing as marriage, why *do they not marry?*"

2. "If a man choose to have it in his power to *dismiss a woman at his pleasure*, or to retain her in a state of humiliation and dependance, inconsistent with the rights which marriage would confer upon her, it is *not* the same thing.

"It is not, at any rate, the same thing to the *children*."

Here follow, *Burnet's* cogent statements on the degree of *restraint*, which is proper, on the sexual instincts.

"If the appetites being *natural*, was an argument for indulging them, then the revengeful might as well allow it for *murder*, and the covetous for *stealing*; whose appetites are no less keen on those objects; and yet it is acknowledged, that these appetites ought to be curbed. If the difference is urged, from the injury that another receives, the injury is as great, if a man's wife is defiled, or his daughter corrupted; and it is impossible for a man to let his appetites loose to vagrant lusts, and not to transgress in these particulars; so there was no curing the disorders that must arise from

thence, but by regulating these appetites. And why should we not as well think that God intended our brutish and sensual appetites should be governed by reason, as that the fierceness of beasts should be managed and tamed by the wisdom and for the use of man! So that it is no real absurdity to grant, that appetites were put into men on purpose to exercise their reason in the restraint and government of them; which, to be able to do, ministers a more high and lasting pleasure to a man, than to give them their full scope and range. And if other rules of philosophy be not observed—such as the avoiding those objects that stir passion—nothing raises higher passions than ungoverned lust; nothing darkens the understanding and depresses a man's mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent returns of other immoralities, such as oaths and imprecations, which are only intended to compass what is desired; the *expense* that is necessary to maintain these irregularities, makes a man false in his other dealings. All this, he freely confessed, was true; upon which I urged, that if it was reasonable for a man to regulate his appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him; was it not as reasonable for God to prescribe a regulation of those appetites, whose unrestrained course did produce such mischievous effects? That it could not be denied, but doing to others what we would have them do unto us, was a just rule; those men, then, that knew how extremely sen-

sible they themselves would be of the dishonour of their families, in the case of their wives, and daughters, and sisters, must needs condemn themselves for doing that which they could not bear from another; and if the peace of mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief measures of our actions; then let all the world judge, whether a man that confines his appetites and lives contented at home, is not much happier than those that let their desires run after forbidden objects. Yet, that this cannot be done, either steadily or with any satisfaction, unless the mind does inwardly comply with, and *delight* in the dictates of virtue; and that could not be effected, except a man's nature were internally regenerated and changed by a higher principle; till that came about, corrupt nature would be strong, and philosophy but feeble, especially when it struggled with such appetites and passions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the constitution of one's body."

IV.

UNIVERSAL SCEPTICISM.

METAPHYSICAL STUDIES.

(Part 2d, chap. ii.)

WHAT Hume and the writers of his school, aided by the less systematic, but perhaps even more captivating Byron, long laboured to produce, may now be said to

be the prevailing characteristic of the minds of some of the bettermost, as well as the mere smatterers, amongst our students of the present day. An universal state of obstinate doubt and disputation, concerning every thing not absolutely capable of ocular demonstration (especially in all moral and religious questions), seems to be rather gaining ground, than diminishing from among us, as Mr. Stewart ventured to anticipate.

That it is degrading, and a sign of an ill ordered mind (however acute in some particular things), must indeed be conceded; and, as Mr. Stewart has in this respect most truly observed, is more closely allied to credulity and weakness than may at first sight be imagined. It is also so complete a distortion of the healthy operation of the intellectual faculty, that in many instances I am persuaded, such universal doubt and irresolution, amount to positive insanity. "Oh what a noble mind is here overthrown!" is an exclamation, painfully and widely applicable in these our times. In how many once promising and fervid spirits round us, do we see,

"that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh!"

* "There is, I think, good reason for hoping that the sceptical tendency of the present age will be only a temporary evil. While it continues, however, it is an evil of the most alarming nature."—*Dugald Stewart's Philos. of Mind*; Introd. part ii.

Among the most pregnant causes (supplementary to those which are set forth in detail, in the body of the foregoing treatise), there is one which especially deserves our close attention. I mean, that branch of study which is commonly termed, metaphysical; more especially that department of it which treats of, the nature and operations of the human mind.

It not unfrequently happens, that, previous to the study of the proofs of religion, natural or revealed, the mind of the student is turned inquisitively into speculations of this sort; and the almost inevitable result from the amazing difficulties of the subject, is a precipitate advance into regions of the most pitiable intellectual confusion; in all probability a considerable deterioration of health; an increasing unfitness for the ordinary affairs, and scepticism about the well established rules of life.

“Few metaphysicians are to be found (observes the acute Mr. Stewart) who are not deficient in the power of observation; for although a taste for such abstract speculations is far from being common, it is more apt, perhaps, than any other, when it has once been formed, to take an *exclusive hold of the mind, and to shut up the other sources of intellectual improvement.* To prevent any danger from this quarter, I apprehend that the study of the mind should form the last branch of the education of youth; an order which nature herself seems to point out, by what I have already remarked,

with respect to the development of our faculties. After the understanding is well stored with particular facts, and has been conversant with particular scientific pursuits, it will be enabled to speculate concerning its own powers with additional advantage, and will run no hazard of indulging too far in such inquiries."—Ch. vi., sec. vii., *Elements of Philos. Hum. Mind.*

But as it is, the most serious inconvenience is perpetually occurring, from an inattention to this rule; and nothing can be more distressing to a man, who has himself ever had to struggle through such painful irregularity of study, than to see others toiling along, or entering, day by day, on this most perplexing and wretched system of things; for miserable and wretched must be a state of universal scepticism to any calm and well-intentioned man, howsoever it may be brought about. The premature engagement of the mind in the study of its own consciousness, is, I am persuaded, one not unfrequent cause of that painful confusion.

It may be true, that no very considerable number of students are doomed to drink of such exceedingly bitter and distasteful waters; but that some are, whom I most anxiously desire in this little work to serve, is sufficient reason for my yet endeavouring, in addition to the cautions suggested throughout the main body of the foregoing work, and that important one derivable from the immediately preceding observations, to suggest,

in this place, some few considerations *further*, which may possibly be of use at various times, and under different circumstances, to alleviate and direct.

I will suppose, then, that there are no hindrances from inattention to either of the causes, enlarged on in the main body of this work; that a man has given becoming attention, to the *nature or kind* of proofs of which alone moral and religious questions are susceptible, and, to the *facts* adduced in support of the Christian revelation; that he is carefully abstaining from either, or any combination, of the moral impediments stated in the second division of this work; and that he is in the habit of looking up, in reverence to the Deity, for * direction in his investigations of His will. I think I have a right to say, if either of the foregoing be omitted, or not honestly attended to, a man ought not to be surprised at his scepticism, nor ought others to wonder at or pity him for it; it is palpably his own fault.

* "The degree of conviction produced by Paley's Evidences, was, however, sufficiently powerful to make me *pray daily for divine assistance*. This was done in a very simple manner. Every morning I repeated the Lord's Prayer seriously and attentively, offering up to my Maker a sincere desire of the true knowledge of him. This practice I continued three years; my persuasion growing stronger all the while."—*White's Evid. against Cath.* p. 18.

But, supposing these things seriously and solemnly attended to, and yet, the mind environed with doubts and perplexities: if they be continuous, *one* important consideration to be borne in mind is, that whereas, *probability* is, after all, the guide of life, the speculative difficulties, in which religion is involved, are the principal trial to some, in a moral sense. There are some students and others, so abstracted from the ordinary temptations of life, that were it not for some such difficulties, this scene of things would be no probation to them at all. Here, then, is one use, of such doubts and anxieties to some, even after they have been, on the whole, convinced of the truth and importance of religion: the probation of such, apparently consists, more than any thing, in, how *they will act under such and such* difficulties.

The state of *health*, also, is a point not to be overlooked, in ascertaining the origin of the universal doubtfulness and irresolution, which characterises the minds of some well-informed men. If the functions of the liver be deranged in that particular way, common to students and sedentary persons, a gloom will be thrown over every thing. From this cause, or some similar ones well known to physicians, a man is often hindered from realizing all that satisfaction he might *otherwise*, from the clearest deductions of his reason and his most earnest prayers.

Every man may have observed, how an injudicious meal, some animal appliance, excess of study, neglect of proper exercise, and the like, have often involved his mind in deadness and confusion and scepticism upon the most certain topics—on topics of which he had no solid doubts before, and which doubts have constantly disappeared, as the effects of the incautiousness or excess have passed away. The man who has had his mental enjoyment invaded in this way before, will be more careful in future to avoid the occasions of it; and will wait with patience while the gloom may rest upon him.

On all such occasions, he must throw himself boldly on the conclusions of clearer and better hours,* though he may have even so many (and he will have an abun-

* “ In time of temptation, be not busy to dispute, but rely upon the conclusion, and throw yourself upon God; be sure to esteem all changes of belief which offer themselves at the time of your greatest weakness (contrary to the persuasions of your best understanding) to be temptations, and *reject* them accordingly.

“ It is a prudent course, that in our health and best advantages, we lay up particular arguments and instruments of persuasion and confidence to be brought forth and used in the great day of expense; and that, especially in such things, in which we use to be most tempted, and in which we are least confident.”—*Taylor's Holy Living*, ch. iv., sec. 1.

dance of) doubts of those former conclusions in these times of gloom ; yet, he must resolutely resolve not to listen to them, and cast himself boldly, for the present, on his former conclusions. Let him force his mind also back upon his few great elementary principles : as for instance, the certainty of death ; its probable nearness ; the being of God ; his judging the world ; this life as a pilgrimage and probation ; the folly of deadness to any thing so important ; the danger of anything which may *possibly* offend Him, in whose presence we *may* immediately appear.

On occasions of this sort, (happy they, who are strangers to them !) when the mind seems hedged in and clogged and weighed down in this miserable way—the object is, to rouse it into something like its healthy, natural, customary action. The recollection, how little mankind in general will make allowance for these our depressions, and will even ridicule them, is one, important in this view. If the difficulties in revealed religion assume an unusual importance on any such occasion, the analogy of nature, (wherein, equal perplexities meet us at all points,) may suggest much relief—as for *arguing* with ourselves at such times as these, it is out of the question. With respect to the truth of Christianity for instance, on such occasions, if tried in that way, I content myself with such an argument as that

at foot.* I may have mind enough left for *that*, when almost anything beyond it would appear obscure.†

Prayer, of course, is the great relief to the man who believes he has been told, on Divine authority, in every thing, by "prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let his request be made known unto God;" and, that if he does so, "the *peace* of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep his heart and mind."

If the individual is religious, the recollection of one's various moral delinquencies in the eyes of Him, who will one day bring us to judgment, is a sufficiently rousing and definite consideration. At all events it may be well for such an one to ask himself, "To *whom* he shall go," if he give up his reliance and seeks consolation any where but in Him who "hath the words of eternal life."

If he is a believer in the New Testament, he may call to mind, that Faith is there defined to be, the "sub-

* "There is no assignable character which will account for the conduct of the apostles, supposing their story to be false. If *bad* men, what would have induced them to take such pains to promote virtue?

"If *good* men, they would not have gone about the country with a string of lies in their mouths."

† See Appendix, xvi. on Duty and Efficacy of Prayer. Also Appendix, xvii. where some Forms, for Students, by Bacon and others.

stance of things hoped for, the evidence of things *not seen*," and, that, "hope that is *seen*, is *not* hope,"—he may remember, "if any man will *do* God's will, *he shall know of the doctrine*,"—that exquisitely appropriate prayer also, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief," and that touching inquiry of the Psalmist, and answer to his own soul, in some such general frame of mind as has been the subject of the note,

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou *disquieted* within me? *Hope thou in God!* for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

V.

HUME.

(Page 61.)

I apprehend, that Lord John Russell, has correctly stated the origin and value of Mr. Hume's scepticism on religious, as well as other commonly admitted questions, when, alluding to his treatment of a particular point of history, he remarks, "Mr. Hume attacked this, as he did all *other* established opinions, from a *love of argument and of paradox*;"* and, it appears to me, that Mr. Stewart's well known animadversions, on that

* "Essay on the Constitution," p. 312.

class of men of whom Hume was, both in his own day and since, so influential a member, give a correct estimate of the weight which is due to a multitude of their opinions. "In the present age," observes that sagacious writer, "in which the tendency of fashionable opinions is directly opposite to those of the vulgar; the philosophical scepticism of by far the greater number of those who value themselves on an emancipation from popular errors, arises from the very same weakness with the credulity of the multitude; nor, is it going too far to say, with Rousseau, that, 'he who, in the end of the eighteenth century, has brought himself to abandon all his early principles without discrimination, would probably have been a bigot in the days of the League.'"

It would, indeed, be out of taste to deny to Mr. Hume the qualities of an elegant, forcible, and ingenious writer. In all his multifarious disquisitions—in metaphysics, in morals, history, politics, and, even in religion, there is much, which is original, and just, and striking; but his inveterate love for paradox and singularity, combined with other causes no less influential on the healthy exercise of the mental faculty, seem, to have hurried him, into such a state of universal scepticism, as is now generally admitted, to be as degrading as it is miserable and pernicious.

* "Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind."
Intro. Part ii. Sec. 1.

Perhaps no one ever pronounced a juster opinion, than Hume himself, on many parts of his own writings : “ I dine, I play a game at backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends—and when, after three or four hours’ amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so *cold*, so *strained*, and so *ridiculous*, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.*” It would have been well, both for his own reputation and the welfare of many, if, he *had* proceeded no further in many of these speculations; which, though they appeared to him, (free from the enthusiasm of their composition), cold, strained, and ridiculous; have not appeared so to those thousands who have since so precipitately and eagerly adopted them.

Hume’s great aversion to be called, what he so undoubtedly was, an infidel, in the completest sense of the word, is a singular fact; and shews how little satisfied he was; after all, with his own sceptical principles.

“ I wish your friend had not denominated me an infidel writer,” he writes to Blair, speaking of Campbell, the author of the celebrated reply to his absurd sophism, on Miracles); “ I wish your friend had not denominated me an infidel writer, on account of ten or twelve pages

* “ Treatise on Human Nature,” i. 467. (Quoted in *Horne’s Letter to Adam Smith*).

which seem to him to have that tendency, while I have written so many volumes on history, literature, politics, trade, morals, which in that particular at least, are entirely inoffensive. Is a man to be called a drunkard, because he has been fuddled once in his life-time."* The fact is, Hume was not a man of the slightest sincerity—(I am informed also, that his "Posthumous Correspondence," prove him likewise to have been equally destitute of moral principle). Acute and wary at one moment, he contradicts himself flatly the next † Why was it necessary, when writing an Essay, dictated by the most bitter aversion to Christianity, to conclude it, with such a passage as the following?—"This way of reasoning may serve to confound those dangerous friends, or disguised enemies to the Christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. *Our most holy religion* is founded on faith, not on reason," &c. &c.—*Hume's Essay on Miracles*. Why this concealment? why this unworthy disguise?—and yet, it is precisely what we find that class of writers continually resorting to. ‡

* See "Preface to Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles.

† See "Campbell's Dissertation," sec. iii.—"Mr. Hume gives up his favourite argument."

‡ See abundant instances, given by Leland, from

The injurious tendency of Mr. Hume's peculiar notions on the nature of evidence, and moral obligation, has been evinced, by numerous writers,* as acute, and influenced by more benevolent principles than himself. His favourite argument on miracles, besides being virtually abandoned by himself,† is now seldom

the writings of the clever but profligate *Bolingbroke*, and others of his school, whose names are now, happily, almost forgotten.

* See *Leland's Deistical Writers*, 2d vol. (Art. *Hume*).

Beattie's Essay on Truth.

Horne's Letter to Adam Smith on "Hume's Philosophy."

Milner's Reply to Gibbon, part iii. sec. 12.
 ("Mr. *Hume*.")

† See the 3d section of *Campbell's Treatise* before referred to, ("Mr. Hume gives up his favourite argument"), of which, even Hume himself, in a letter to *Campbell*, had the candour to acknowledge: "It is impossible for me not to see the ingenuity of your performance, and the great learning which you have displayed against me. I consider myself as very much honoured in being thought worthy of an answer by a person of so much merit; and, as I find that the public does you justice, with regard to the ingenuity and good composition of your piece, I hope you will have no reason to repent engaging with an antagonist, whom, perhaps, in strictness, you might have ventured to neglect." —*Preface to Campbell's Diss.* p. 3.

heard of. Ingenious and staggering, as at first sight it may appear, it is, in fact, most completely absurd; and, there is no doubt, Hume saw it so, though pride and apathy, kept him from withdrawing it. Looking back with the calm eye of reflection, upon the excitement which that Essay caused when it first appeared, and the rush of able men to demolish it; while we admit, considering Mr. Hume's celebrity in some other matters, that it was natural, we may now be disposed to think it was unnecessary; and that, such multitudes of answerers, while many of them only darkened a question, which to us appears so manifest, conferred an importance, and drew public attention to, what, would necessarily have sunk into oblivion, by its own weight, almost immediately.

While, for the satisfaction of any one who may wish to see, what a few of the ablest of these respected defenders of our religion urged on that occasion, we willingly append a list of books which will be useful: it is nevertheless our own opinion, with the luminous Paley, at the conclusion of his unanswerable argument on this very subject, that, the fallacy of the theorem is quickest seen, by trying it at once on a simple case. In these days, it is really not worth a man's while to wade through the pros and cons of a question, which it is a disgrace to the human intellect ever to have been bruited. Take, the well-known passage of the author

above named ; it must be a singularly constituted mind which would refuse assent in such a case ; and yet, if there were any truth in Hume's hypothesis, we ought indignantly to refuse it.

“ The short consideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation in Mr. Hume's conclusion, is the following : When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is, to *try it upon a simple case* ; and if it produce a false result, he is sure there must be some mistake in the demonstration. Now, to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem,—If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived ; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet ; if they should refuse with one voice, to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case ; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect ; if it was at last executed ; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account ; still, if

altogether superfluous here to mention, for the sake of any who may possibly have been himself disturbed, or knows any one who is so, by the dogmas of these persons; that, in either, Bishop Watson's, or the late Mr. Scott's, easily-attainable Replies, to Paine, he will find all their chief points clearly and concisely obviated. What the unhappy *Taylor* has since scraped together, in addition to the foregoing, from Volney, and others more recent, will be found specifically met in the able pamphlet of *Dr. Smith*, published by Holdsworth and Ball, London, 1830, price 1s. 6d., and "*Remarks on the Diegesis*," Cadell, 1830, 1s. 6d. In these, and in the valuable lists of references given by these learned writers, every thing peculiar to Taylor and his party will be found, fully provided for.

VII.

GIBBON.

(Page 60.)

THE celebrated Porson, in his letter to Travers, after a very just eulogium of Gibbon's ability, and the elegance displayed in his most interesting History, has the following remarks, which seem to place the scepticism of this individual in its proper point of view.

"We blame him for carrying on the attack in an insidious manner, and with improper motives. He

often makes, when he cannot readily find, an occasion to insult our religion, which he hates so cordially, that he might seem to revenge some personal injury. Such is his eagerness in the cause, that he stoops to the most despicable pun, or to the most awkward perversion of language, for the pleasure of turning Scripture into ribaldry, or of calling Jesus an impostor. *A rage for indecency pervades the whole work*, but especially the last volumes. If the History were anonymous, I should guess that these disgraceful obscenities were written by some debauchee, who having from age, or accident, or excess, survived the practice of lust, still indulged himself in the luxury of speculation, and exposed the impotent imbecility, after he had lost the vigour of the passions."—*Simpson's Plea*, p. 19.

This is severe, but, in my opinion, just; and is an adequate explanation of his infidelity.

His "Secondary Causes," were refuted by a multitude of writers, so soon as they appeared. A list of the principal is given hereafter, but, perhaps, in "*Watson's Series of Letters to Gibbon*," and *Joseph Milner's* splendid pamphlet, "*Gibbon's Account of Christianity Considered*," every argument will be found, which the most learned or most sceptical can require.

I subjoin a passage, which seems to take an accurate view of the weight and importance which is assignable to the irreligious parts of "*The Decline and Fall*."

“Though we were to concede the validity of the whole claim made by Gibbon, for the strength and efficacy of those mere human causes to which he ascribes the propagation of Christianity, I do not perceive that the just evidence of the religion, would be materially weakened by that concession. To a certain extent, Gibbon’s argument is, no doubt, valid. It explains much, and it does not matter how much, of the method used to effect the establishment of the religion. But the *germ of the religion, it leaves wholly unaccounted for*, except on the supposition of those original miracles, of which it has been the business of this treatise to assert the performance. In truth, in the work of this eminent historian, there is but *little in the way of argument*, which we need distrust, on the ground of its unfairness towards the Christian religion. The disgrace and mischief of its offence against religion, consists almost wholly in the moral contagion of that *sarcastic impiety* which pervades it; and which, though each drop makes but a feeble impression, is, from mere repetition, dangerous in the extreme, and will often have, even on the philosophical mind, an effect almost mechanical.”—*Penrose on Miracles*, p. 252.

Consult, *Faber’s “Difficulties of Infidelity,”* p. 194-205.

Horne’s “Introduction,” i. 353-356 (4th edit.).

Ketts' "Bampton Lectures, for 1790," 8vo.

Gibbon's "Account of Christianity Considered,"
(1 vol. 8vo.) by Joseph Milner.

Watson's "Apology for Christianity, in a Series of
Letters to Mr. Gibbon."

White's "Bampton Lectures."

VIII.

MATERIALISM.

(Page 78.)

WHY may not a Materialist be a Christian?—and have not many excellent persons been needlessly alarmed about the opinions of certain foreign physiologists, and their ingenious supporters in this country? I grant, that the inculcation of any doctrine which tends to prove the soul is *necessarily extinct*, when the present organization of the matter of the human body is at end, has a bad moral tendency, and is an uncomfortable doctrine. But who, it may be asked, of the most strenuous asserters of the present dependence of the mind on organization, ever asserted that it may not be *immortal*, notwithstanding?

The *immateriality* and *immortality* of the soul, are two *very* different questions; but these have been confounded; and in consequence, many well-intended treatises have altogether failed in their effects upon

that class of persons for whom they were chiefly designed.

Whatever the physiologists alluded to may have thought themselves, or even insinuated; that, because the soul *seems* to terminate with the organization of the matter of the body, it ceases for ever to exist, is not at all a necessary consequence; nor do I think that all who have been treated as if they said so, have meant any thing of the kind.

"The assertion," writes Dr. Elliotson, in his Notes to Blumenbach, "*the assertion that the mind is a power of the living brain*, is not an assertion that it is material; for a power or property of matter cannot be matter; neither is it an assertion that this power cannot be a something immortal, subtle, immaterial,—diffused through and connected with the brain. Nor, because we refuse to listen to a mere hypothesis, respecting spirit, are we *necessarily* to deny the resurrection. For if a divine revelation pronounce that there shall be another order of things, in which the mind shall exist again, we ought firmly to believe it, because neither *our experience nor our reason can inform us what will be hereafter; and we must be senseless to start objections on a point beyond the penetration of our faculties.*" *

* Blumenbach's "*Elements of Physiology*," by Dr. Elliotson. 4th edition, p. 72-75.

This is, to my mind, a just and admirable statement of the case; and it is assuredly giving the arguments of some sceptical physiologists a degree of importance in a religious point of view, which they do not merit, and encouraging a notion that physiological or any other researches are hostile to Christianity; for men, to write and speak of them in the illiberal manner of some well-intentioned and excellent people, who have, however, proved themselves very unequal to the subject, and by the confusion spread by them over the whole question, applying some passages in senses which their professional delinquents never meant, and arguing as if the soul, because it now seems to depend on the organization of the living brain, cannot therefore be *immortal*, have made many more sceptics than they have convinced.

The celebrated Dr. Rush, of America, remarks, I think most justly upon this subject, that "*the writers in favour of the immortality of the soul, have done that truth great injury by connecting it necessarily with its immateriality.*" The immortality of the soul depends upon the will of the Deity, and not upon the supposed properties of spirit. Matter is in its own nature as immortal as spirit. It is resolvable, by heat and moisture, into a variety of forms; but it requires the same Almighty power to annihilate, that it did to create it. I know of no arguments to prove the immortality of

the soul, but such as we derive from the Christian revelation."—*Medical Inquiries and Observations*, vol. ii., p. 15, as quoted by *Elliotson*, p. 77.

"All the great ends of morality and religion (writes Mr. Locke), are well enough secured, without philosophical proofs of the soul's immortality; since it is evident, that he who made us first begin to subsist here, sensible and intelligent beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can restore us to the like state of sensibility in another world, and make us capable there to receive the retribution he has designed to men, according to their doings in this life. And, therefore, it is *not of such mighty necessity to determine one way or the other*, as some, over-zealous, for, or against, the immortality of the soul, have been forward to make the world believe."—*Essay*, Book iv., ch. iii., sec. vi.

It seems to have been too much taken for granted, by writers on these questions, that the Scriptures assert the strict immateriality, as well as the certain *immortality* of the human soul; this is a great error! The Scriptures are plain enough on the latter point; on the former, good men may, I am convinced, and will, more or less, always differ. A materialist *may* be an infidel, but not at all *necessarily*, as we have seen.

"It is of no consequence in the world to any purpose of religion (remarks the profound Mr. Hallet), whether

the soul of man be material or immaterial. All that religion is concerned to do, is, to prove that that which now thinks in us, shall *continue* to think, and be capable of happiness or misery for ever. This religion proves, from the express promises and threatenings of the gospel. But religion is not concerned to determine of what *nature* this thinking immortal substance is.

“ For my part, I judge it to be immaterial ; but if a man should think that the soul is mere matter, endowed with the power of thought, he would not overturn any article in religion, that is of the least consequence to promote the *ends* of religion. For, while a man thinks that his soul is matter, he necessarily thinks, that God, who made matter capable of thinking, and endowed the matter of his soul in particular with the power of thought, is capable, by the same Almighty power, of preserving the matter of his soul capable of thinking for ever.”

I will now draw this extended note to a conclusion, with a passage from the writings of one of the least bigoted and most intellectual men that perhaps ever lived ; in which, I heartily concur. “ Believing as I do, in the truth of the Christian religion, which teaches that men are accountable for their actions ; I trouble not myself with dark disquisitions concerning necessity and liberty, *matter and spirit*. Hoping, as I do, for eternal life through Jesus Christ ; I am not disturbed

at my inability, clearly to conceive myself, that the soul is, *or is not*, a substance distinct from the body." Nor *need* any one ! To ascertain this positively, is beyond our faculties. The *objections*, from experience or reason, either way, neither help, *nor hinder us*.

IX.

MR. LAWRENCE.

(Page 78.)

To those who may have been influenced by the authority and example of Mr. Lawrence, the following very candid avowal, from the pen of that intelligent surgeon, may be of service ; both, as an antidote to such as have imbibed from him, some of those opinions which he here so deeply regrets, and, a warning to those who may be in danger of treading in his energetic, but incautious and reprehensible footsteps. " Experience and reflection have only tended to convince me more strongly, that the publication of certain passages in these writings (his Lectures), was *highly improper* ; to increase my regret at having sent them forth to the world ; to make me satisfied with the measure of withdrawing them from public circulation, and consequently to resolve me, not only never to reprint them, but also never to publish any thing more on similar

subjects."—*Extract from a Letter to Bridewell Hospital, on soliciting his re-appointment as Surgeon to that Institution.*

To this, nothing need be added. It is a warning to us all.

X.

MEDICAL SCEPTICISM.

(Page 78.)

THERE is no more just reason for surprise at scepticism, in medical men, than in other men; nor, any reason to believe that it exists among them, in any greater degree than among other men, of similar habits of study and occupation.

The interesting investigations of the dissecting-room, have no more to do with making men necessarily religious, than the examination of any other of the wonderful phenomena which pervade the universe. At the first entrance upon studies of this kind, as Lord Bacon has memorably observed, a species of general scepticism is rather to be *expected* than marvelled at. "It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience," remarks that great man, "that a little, or superficial taste of philosophy, may perchance incline the mind of man to Atheism, but a full draught thereof brings the

mind back again to religion. For, in the *entrance* of philosophy, when the second causes, which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, and the mind itself cleaves unto them, and dwells there, an oblivion of the highest cause may creep in; and when a man *passeth on farther*, and beholds the dependency, continuation, and confederacy of causes, and the works of Providence; then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe, that 'the highest link of nature's chain, must needs be tied to Jupiter's chair.' " *

As for the supposed religious tendency of the affecting scenes, which the profession of medical men calls on them to witness, they do no more, *necessarily*, lead the mind to serious reflection and sound morality, than the hearing of affecting sermons, or the reading of religious books. I confess, I cannot see why medical men should be expected to be religious more than other men; nor do I think that, on the whole, they are less so; though, from mingling so much in general and varied society, their scepticism, where it does prevail, is more likely to be known and spoken of than that of other men.

The style of a medical man's education, both before

* Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," book i. chap. 1.

he enters, and while at the hospitals, universities, &c. and the occupations of his life afterwards, are, it seems to me, *peculiarly unfavourable* to encourage the examination of the evidences and doctrines of revelation; and his profession rendering him so much less capable of attending with regularity and comfort the ordinances of religion, and the opportunities of instruction, which every other class of men may unrestrictedly, if they please, enjoy: these things prepare me rather, to *expect* to find, a medical man less informed in religious subjects than most others in his rank of life; though I by no means affirm that I always find it so. A man is not necessarily acquainted with the history of Greece because he is a good chemist; nor at all necessarily with the history and truths of Christianity because a good surgeon or physiologist.

Undoubtedly, it is much to be regretted, where a medical man is not acquainted with the *evidences* for, and the *peculiar consolations* of Christianity; because he has in his power, from his office, to do more in this kind of instruction among those who need it, than most others; and it is a pleasing feature in the present times, that such men as Haller, Boerhaave, Harvey, Sydenham, Mead, Gregory, Mason Good, and the like, are increasing amongst us.

I append several excellent passages on this subject, which will greatly strengthen what I have offered in

this note, both by the justness of the reasonings, and the weight of their respected authorities.

"It is often asserted," writes the philosophic Olinthus Gregory in his late interesting Life of Dr. Mason Good, "it is often asserted, that medical men are more inclined to indifference in religion, and in fact, to infidelity, than any other class of men. It would of course, be difficult, if not impossible, to institute an actual computation; but, if there could, I suppose the result would be, that, lawyers, civil engineers, chemists, mathematicians, astronomers, commercial men, and in Germany at least, even theologians, would supply as great a proportion of persons either professedly infidels, or totally indifferent to all religion, as the medical profession. The *principal reason in each and in all is the same*. The mind, while left to itself, is so completely absorbed in its selected pursuit, whether it be of literature, science, or business, as to have neither time nor inclination to turn to so serious a concern as that of religion. If a few short intervals of leisure can be stolen from such incessant occupation, what can be so salutary, and what so harmless, as in those brief moments to avoid every thing gloomy, and allow the intellect and soul to expatiate in the regions of conviviality and pleasure? Thus amid the uninterrupted alternations of employment and hilarity, no space being appropriated to the most interesting as well as elevated of all topics, it is altogether neglected :

a fleeting consciousness of the neglect, intermingled too often, we may fear, with a persuasion (which cannot with the utmost effort be entirely shut out) that sin has been actually committed, as well as a binding duty omitted, by a natural process, renders the mind eager to escape from itself, into the regions of uncertainty, indifference, and it may be scepticism. Slight modifications in the causes will produce commensurate variations in the effects; but the general result will I apprehend be nearly the same, with regard to all the specified classes. Literary and scientific men will evidently be tempted more often to announce their scepticism, where it exists, than men engrossed, in commercial pursuits; and thus it may be incorrectly supposed to prevail more in those classes than in the latter. Medical men intermingling more with general society, from their professional vocation, will again, on that account, be farther exposed to the charge than even others, who have enjoyed a scientific education; yet I apprehend, scarcely any real difference will be found; or if there should, that it is at once imputable to the dissolute habits indulged by many persons of that profession, during their attendance at the hospital, remote from parental watchfulness, and free from all restraints of moral discipline."—See *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Character of the late John Mason Good, M. D.* by *Olinthus Gregory*, p. 345.

See also p. 62, of the Lectures of the celebrated Dr. Gregory; also Rennell's Remarks on Scepticism, pp. 54 58, (6th ed.); also the Acknowledgments of the talented Count Struensee, formerly Prime Minister of Denmark, (in early life himself a physician) to Dr. Munter, just before his execution, (pp. 197, 198, of the Translation of his Life, 1 vol. 8vo. London, 1825), an intellectual treat, from first to last.

XI.

GEOLOGY.

(Page 78.)

WITH the following sensible observations (which I here gladly insert, prefatory to the list of works confirming the Mosaic Records which is appended), most unprejudiced and really philosophical investigators of geology seem disposed to concur.

“The account of the creation given by Moses, does not profess to furnish any thing like a systematic or elaborate detail of the mode in which the materials of the earth were brought to their actual form and situation. The warmest lover of geology, would scarcely expect to find this in the record; the very terms in which such an account could be expressed, requiring an advanced state of science; and the information, when conveyed, being altogether unprofitable, as to those uses which

are the proper objects of revelation. *To know his connexion with the Creator* and moral Governor of the world, is *necessary* to the virtue and happiness of man. To investigate the regular laws to which the created world conforms, or the process by which it was reduced to that obedience, is a delightful exercise of the reason he possesses; but, is totally unconnected with those higher interests which a revelation has in view. But any curious information, as to the *structure* of the earth, ought still less to be expected by any one, acquainted with the general character of the Mosaic records. There is nothing in them either to gratify the curiosity, or repress the researches of mankind, when brought, in the process of cultivation, to calculate the motions of the heavenly bodies, or speculate on the formation of the globe. The expressions of Moses are evidently accommodated to the first and familiar notions derived from the sensible appearances of the earth and heavens: and the absurdity of supposing, that the literal interpretation of terms in Scripture ought to interfere with the advancement of philosophical inquiry, would have been as generally forgotten as renounced, if the oppressors of Galileo *

* The sentiments of Galileo himself precisely accorded with those of the philosophical author of the foregoing observations. "I am inclined to believe,"

had not found a place in history. The concessions, if they may be so called, of the believers in revelation on this point, have been amply remunerated by the sublime discoveries as to the prospective wisdom of the Creator, which have been gradually unfolded by the progressive improvements in *astronomical* knowledge. We may trust with the same confidence as to any future results from *geology*, if that science should ever find its Newton, and break through the various obstacles peculiar to that study, which have hitherto precluded any solution of its numerous and opposite phenomena. All I am concerned to establish is, the unreasonableness of supposing that geological discoveries, as far as they have hitherto proceeded, are hostile to the Mosaic account of the creation. No

(writes Galileo to Christina, Grand Duchess of Tuscany)
“that the intention of the sacred Scriptures is, to give to mankind the information necessary to their salvation; and which, surpassing all human knowledge, can by no other means be accredited, than by the mouth of the Holy Spirit. But, I do not hold it necessary to believe, that the same God which has endowed us with senses, with speech, and intellect, intended that we should neglect the use of these, and seek by other means, for knowledge which they are sufficient to procure us.”—See Life of Galileo, *Library of Useful Knowledge*, pt. ii. p. 46.

rational naturalist would attempt to describe, either from the brief narration in Genesis or otherwise, the process by which our system was brought from confusion into a regular and habitable state. No rational theologian will direct his hostility against any theory, which, acknowledging the agency of the Creator, only attempts to point out the secondary instruments he has employed. Hitherto, indeed, those theories have had the fate of the monsters of fabulous antiquity, and been destroyed by one another, leaving the only record to which any certain reference can be made to triumph over their fate. It may safely be affirmed, that no geological theory has yet been proposed, which is not less reconcilable to ascertained facts and conflicting phenomena, than to the Mosaic history.

“According to that history, we are bound to admit, that, only one general destruction or revolution of the globe has taken place, since the period of that creation which Moses records, and of which Adam and Eve were the first inhabitants. The certainty of one event of that kind would appear from the discoveries of geologists, even if it were not declared by the sacred historian. But, we are not called upon to deny the possible existence of *previous worlds*, from the wreck of which our globe was organized, and the ruins of which are now furnishing matter to our curiosity. The belief of

their existence is indeed consistent with rational probability, and somewhat confirmed by the discoveries of astronomy, as to the plurality of worlds."—*Sumner's* "Records of the Creation," 3d ed. vol. i. p. 323-343. See an excellent statement to the same general effect in "Outlines of History," (*Lardner's* "Cabinet Cyclopædia," pp. 1, 2).

Also the same line of argument most admirably pursued, in the prefatory observations to the Review of *Mr. Lyell's* recent and most valuable publication, in the Quarterly Review for October, 1830.

The following works may be consulted by any desirous of seeing how the ascertained geological phenomena have been applied, to illustrate the Mosaic Record. Though it will be impossible for us to concur in the detail of all the respected authors' hypotheses, and we may doubt the advisableness of attempting so much precision as some have done, on so peculiar a subject, we shall yet all applaud the excellence of their design, and be instructed by a large portion of their arguments.

Encyclopædia Britannica; art. "Geology."

Dr. John Mason Good's *Book of Nature*; vol. i., p. 121-170, second edition.

Dr. Ure's late work on *Geology*; 1 vol. 8vo.

Faber's *Difficulties of Infidelity*; p. 54, 68.; ed. 1824.

Horæ Mosaicæ, by Faber.

Phillips and Conybeare's *Outlines of Geology of England*; Preface, sec. 13.

Jamieson's *Preface to Cuvier's Essay*.

Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaical Genealogies, by Granville Penn. 8vo. 1822.

Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures; vol. i., pp. 167-169, 4th edition. 1823.

Library of Useful Knowledge, No. 27, "Outline of General Knowledge," chap. ii., pp. 3, 4.

XII.

VARIETIES IN THE HUMAN RACE.

(Page 78.)

For the assistance of any, who may be desirous of reading the arguments by which the Mosaic narrative of the descent of mankind, from a single pair, is freed from the sceptical objections of Lord Kaimes, Rousseau, Voltaire, and the more modern physiological Infidels, a list of references to the works of approved authors on this head is here appended.

Sir James Mackintosh, in the 1st vol. of his *History of England*, lately published (p. 4), after enumerating the principal classes into which modern naturalists, for convenience, have divided the human race, has a passage, which seems to place the question on its proper footing. Between the Negro, or Mongol, and

the European, there exists so great a difference of external appearance, that, as before observed, some have urged, that they must necessarily each be descended from a different stock. "But," as Sir James very justly observes, "though the Negro and the Mongol differ much more deeply and fundamentally than the Hindoo and the Arab from the European, yet, those who grant, that the latter difference is the work of physical causes, in a long course of ages, will find it hard to prove, that causes more powerful, and acting in a longer time, may not have at length produced the wider difference."

That these powerful and long-continued causes (as situation, climate, food, disease, &c. &c.) have effected this wide difference, in persons originally descended from the same common stock, it is the object of the following writers, by luminous and comprehensive surveys, to illustrate and explain.

Researches into the Physical History of Mankind, by James Cowles Pritchard, M.D. 2 vols.

Blumenbach *de Generi Humani varietate nativa*.

Dr. Mason Good's *Book of Nature*, vol. ii. Lecture 3.

Encyclopædia Britannica, art. Man, Complexion, America, Negro.

Elliotson's *Translation of Blumenbach's Physiology*, p. 561-581. 4th ed. 1828.

Essay on the Causes of the variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, by Dr. S. S. Smith. 1789.

Hale's *Analysis of Chronology*, vol. i. 359-365, 2d ed. 1830.

Heber's, Bishop, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India*, p. 54. &c.

Jacob Bryant's *Treatise on the Christian Religion*, p. 267-276. 8vo. 1792.

Olinthus Gregory's *Life of Mason Good*, p. 270-286.

Horne's *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*, vol. i. 181-183. 4th ed. 1823.

Buffon's *Nat. Hist.* i. 291. Kenrick and Murdock's Translation.

Prof. Zimmerman's *Histoire Geographique de l'Homme*.

Sumner's *Records of the Creation*, i. 344-380. 3d. ed.

Faber's *Horæ Mosaicæ*, &c.

XIII.*.

WORKS ON THE EVIDENCES.†

A SELECTION.

(Page 86.)

Addison, Joseph, Esq.—"The Evidences of the Christian Religion," 1 vol. 12mo.

A very brief but agreeable and clear statement of the Evidences, chiefly, as derivable from Pagan testimonies.

* See also, Lists of Books, affixed to the discussion of particular difficulties, as Appendix, v., vii., xi., xii. &c.

† The reflection, contained in the following passage,

Beattie, James.—"Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth," 1 vol. 8vo.

Discusses the nature of Evidence; exposes the absurdity of universal Scepticism: adapted for those puzzled by Hume's *Metaphysics*.

Blunt, J. J.—"The Veracity of the Gospels and Acts, argued from the undesigned coincidences found in them," 8vo. 1828.

A most masterly and ingenious sequel to the *Horæ Paulinæ*, of Dr. Paley.

Bryant, Jacob.—"Treatise upon the Authenticity of the Scriptures, and the Truth of the Christian Religion," 8vo. 1792.

An ingenious and brief statement of the external Evidences, particularly as to Heathen testimonies; he answers many common objections: adapted for well-educated men of the world.

from the *Religio Laici*, of Dryden (as well as another to the same effect, by Paley, given in Appendix, iv.) seems to me, ever, *irresistibly* convincing; obvious alike to the philosopher, the peasant, and the child; and superabundantly sufficient of itself, for us to stake our best interests upon.

"Whence, but from Heaven, could men unskill'd in arts,
In several ages born, in several parts,
Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price."

Dryden.

Burnet, Gilbert.—"Some passages in the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester."

Answers all the most common objections; well-suited to those whose difficulties have grown out of their dissipations.

Benson, C.—"Two Courses of Hulsean Lectures," 2 vols. 8vo.

The first course states the whole body of the Evidences for Christianity; the second, is on *Scripture Difficulties*; both well-suited to persons of refined taste and education.

Butler, Joseph.—"The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature," 1 vol.

See Remarks on this profound and inimitable work, part i., chap. 1.

The Glasgow edition, 12mo., price 6s., has an admirable Essay prefixed, by Mr. Wilson, pointing out the connexion of this argument with the other branches of the Christian Evidence.

Butler, Joseph.—"Charge to Clergy, in 1751."

Contains valuable suggestions for the *treatment of Infidels*, in the general intercourse of life: useful to the clergy of large towns.

Campbell, George.—"A Dissertation on Miracles," 1 vol. 8vo.

Answers *Hume's* sophistry on miracles; and shews that the miracles on which Christianity is founded, are sufficiently attested: invaluable to those whom Hume has perplexed.

Cecil, Richard.—"Reasons for Repose, addressed to a Christian, subject to temporary alarms respecting the truth of the Scriptures."

Not sufficiently known; more, and better said, in the twenty pages it consists of, on the whole body of the Christian Evidence, than in almost any other writer whatever: a most striking and convincing statement of the Evidences.

Clarke, Samuel.—"The Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion," 1 vol., various editions.

One of the most perspicuous and well arranged statements ever written; suited most to the learned.

Doddridge, Philip.—"The Evidences of Christianity briefly stated," 1 vol., various editions.

Very short and useful.

Douglas, Bishop.—"The Criterion of Miracles," 1 vol.

Points out the false pretensions of Papists and Pagans.

Doddridge, Philip.—"Lectures on the principal subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity," 2 vols. 8vo.

Invaluable to *students*. Parts 5 and 6, state the whole body of the Evidences; and obviate all the common difficulties.

Ellis, John.—"The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Nature," 8vo.

Demonstrates, that reason is insufficient to *discover* religion or morality; that all has come by revelation: of use to students, puzzled by metaphysical and physiological speculations, by proving, that as religion cannot be *proved* by such speculations, so neither can it be *disproved* by them.

Erskine, Thomas.—"Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion," 12mo., 1 vol., 1830.

Shews the Divine origin of Christianity, from its adaptation to the necessities of man, and the constitution of the human mind: peculiarly adapted to minds of a metaphysical turn, and the higher class of enquirers.

Faber, G. S.—"The Difficulties of Infidelity," 8vo.

Answers all the most modern objections, and proves that there is more credulity in the disbelief of Christianity, than in the belief of it. See, also, his "*Horæ Mosaicæ*."

Gregory, Olinthus.—"Letters to a Friend, on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of the Christian Religion." 2 vols. 8vo. 1830.

Chiefly adapted for *philosophical inquirers* into the truth and nature of Christianity. From the pen of a layman and mathematician; it is candid, and clearly written. The errors of the Socinians are well animadverted on.

Grotius, Hugo.—"The Truth of the Christian Religion, with Notes by *Le Clerc*," translated by *Clarke*. 1 vol., various editions.

This well known treatise of that sagacious layman, is still unrivalled, for the use of the learned investigator. No one who has not examined it, can conceive the treasures of information it contains.

Good, John Mason, M. D.—"The Book of Nature," 3 vols. 8vo., 1828.

In the course of this enlightened and Christian survey of every department of human knowledge, many modern *objections and difficulties* are considered—as geology, races of men, materialism, &c.

Graves, Richard.—"Lectures on the Pentateuch," 8vo.

Contain admirable solutions of difficulties in the Mosaic Records : invaluable to the student.

Horne, T. H.—"Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Scriptures," 4 vols. 8vo. 1827.

The first volume is devoted to the Evidences, and meeting all objections: no student should be without it. The lists and references given are invaluable. Mr. Horne has published an abridged edition of this first volume, for the use of the less learned reader, called

"Deism Refuted, or, Plain Reasons for being a Christian," 1 vol. 12mo.

Hales, William.—"Analysis of Chronology, History," &c., 4 vols. 8vo., 1830.

Obviates all the most *modern objections*, especially those against the Mosaic accounts : indispensable to modern students.

Horne, George.—"Letter to Adam Smith, on the Life, Death, and Philosophy of his friend David Hume."

This brief pamphlet should be read by any one who inclines to Hume's philosophical opinions.

Jenyns, Soame.—"A view of the Internal Evidence of Christian Religion." 1 vol. 12mo. various editions.

Well adapted to *metaphysical doubters* among the more educated classes of enquirers.

Jortin, John.—"Discourses concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion." 1 vol. various editions.

A learned and powerful statement of the whole argument.

Ireland, John.—"Paganism and Christianity compared."

If any one doubts whether a revelation was *required*, at the time when it was given, let him read this truly learned, and masterly comparison.

Keith, A.—"Evidence of the Christian Religion, derived from the literal Fulfilment of Prophecy," 12mo., 1828.

A comparison of the Scripture prophecies, with accounts of modern travellers, and the present state of the world: very useful.

Lyttleton, Lord George.—"Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul," 1 vol., various editions.

Leland, Thomas.—"View of the principal Deistical Writers," 2 vols. 8vo.

Refutes all the objections of the chief deistical writers, from Lord Herbert to Hume; and gives a concise statement of the whole evidence for Christianity. Those unsettled by Bolingbroke, Hume, &c., will find this work invaluable. See also, his "Advantage and Necessity of the Christian revelation," 2 vols. 8vo.

Leslie, Charles.—"Short and Easy Method with the Deists, and Truth of Christianity Demonstrated," 1 vol.

Clear and striking works; as also his "Short and Easy Method with the Jews."

Milner, Joseph.—"Gibbon's Account of Christianity Considered; together with some Strictures on Hume's Dialogues on Natural Religion," 1 vol. 8vo.

Answers all *Gibbon's* insinuations and misrepresentations, and exposes *Hume's* Atheistic tendency in the Dialogues. This is a most splendid performance, and should be in the hands of all who have been discomposed by Hume and Gibbon.

Newton, Thomas.—"Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have been remarkably fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the World." Various editions, 2 vols. 8vo.

Pascal, B.—"Thoughts on Religion." Various editions.

Every department of revealed and natural religion, and the various doctrines of Christianity, discussed in a manner peculiar to this great philosopher. It is a treatise which no well-educated man ought not to have read or to be without.

Powell, W. S.—"Discourses on various Subjects," 1 vol. 8vo.

Particularly valuable to the student, for the acute and perspicuous reply contained in the course of these Discourses on the Evidences to Hume's sophistry on the Miracles.

Paley, William.—"The Evidences of Christianity."

This well-known and unanswerable work, is too long for a sceptically disposed person to begin upon. The more it is studied, and the closer every sentence is scrutinized, the more just admiration it will extort.

Porteus, B.—"The Evidences of the Christian Religion." Various editions, 1 vol.

A very clear and comprehensive, yet brief statement of the whole body of the evidences.

Munter, Dr.—"Narrative of the Conversion and Death of Count Struensee, formerly prime minister of Denmark," translated from the German, by Wendeborn, 1 vol. 8vo.

An unravelling of almost every difficulty in natural or revealed religion, suggested by pride of intellect or profligacy of life. Struensee's letter to Munter, with an account of the process of his mind from infidelity to belief, is peculiarly striking and intellectual. Renel's edition is the best: there is no enthusiasm; all is calm, leisurely and sure.

Rennel, Thomas.—"Remarks on Scepticism," 12mo. 6th. ed. 1823.

Well explains the causes of Scepticism, and refutes the physiological objections of Mr. Lawrence, &c. Of the strength of this *latter* part of these remarks, different opinions are entertained; perhaps they are more ingenious than convincing, but, of the first four chapters it is difficult to speak too highly.

Sumner, J. B.—"The Evidence of Christianity, derived from its Nature and Reception." 12mo. 1 vol.

An original and convincing treatise.

Scott, Thomas.—"Essays on various Subjects." 1 vol. 12mo.

The *first* contains as clear, compendious, and striking a statement of the evidences, as was ever written. Valuable to all classes of the community.

Simpson, D.—"A Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings, addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine,

and wavering Christians of every persuasion." 1 vol. 8vo.

Answers to common objections—testimonies of distinguished laymen—death-beds of Infidels, &c., &c.

Smith, J. P.—"Answer to the Works of Robert Taylor." A Pamphlet. 8vo., price 1s. 6d.

Adapted for the conviction of all classes. The more educated reader will do well also, if called on to examine the assertions of this notorious infidel, to refer to an able Sequel to Dr. Smith's Pamphlet, entitled, "Remarks on the Work of the Rev. Robert Taylor, styled, 'The Diegesis.'" Cadell, 1830.

Sumner, J. B.—"A Treatise on the Records of the Creation," 2 vols. 8vo. 1825.

To shew that the Mosaic Records contain the only satisfactory account of the being, nature, and designs of the Almighty: obviates all the hacknied objections, Origin of Evil—Geology—Race of Men—Population, &c., &c.

Wilson, Daniel.—"The Evidences of Christianity, Stated in a Popular and Practical Manner." 2 vols. 8vo. 1828.

The first vol. states the *External Evidences*; the second, the *Internal*. Both are extremely valuable. The three first Lectures of vol. 1, though only preliminary, are in themselves overwhelming.

Watson, R.—"Two Apologies; one, for Christianity, addressed to Edward Gibbon, Esq.; the other, for the Bible, in answer to Thomas Paine." 1 vol. 8vo.

Too well known to need comment. If there be any thing omitted, it will be found in "Scott's Reply to Paine's Age of Reason;" a treatise brief, and easy to be obtained; scarcely, if, inferior to the giant Watson.

West, Gilbert, Esq.—"Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 vol.

A very original and convincing treatise.

Wrangham, F.—"The Pleiad." A Series of Abridgments from Seven distinguished Writers, on the Evidences of Christianity." (No. 26, Constable's Miscellany). Royal 12mo. 1828.

Should be in the hands of every one.

Warburton's "Julian." 1 vol.; various editions.

To prove the fact of a miraculous interposition, when Julian attempted to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, and to state the nature of the evidence for miracles.

Warton, T.—"Death-Bed Scenes and Conversations."

Chapters i., ii., x., contain striking illustrations of unbelief in various situations and circumstances, with answers to all common objections.

White, Joseph.—"Bampton Lectures. 1784." 1 vol. 8vo.

Refutes Mahometanism, in a striking manner. There is also a powerful general defence of Revelation.

White, J. B.—"Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism." 1 vol. 8vo. 1826.

The first chapter most interestingly portrays the dilemma of an Independent Thinker, brought up in the absurdities of the Roman Catholic profession of Christianity: how Mr. White at last arrived, after having been driven to a state scarcely short of Atheism, to a satisfactory conviction as to the truths of Protestant Christianity. This chapter contains also many valuable remarks on the nature of Evidence.

N.B.—A concise and unexpensive statement, both of the proper *kind* of evidence, and the evidence itself, of the Christian Revelation, has just issued from the press, entitled, "The Nature of the Proof of the Christian Religion," 12mo. Price 3s. It is chiefly from Butler's writings, and well adapted to the case of the higher order of enquirers.

For a person, already convinced, of the truth of Revelation; and only wishing to read, to strengthen and confirm, that conviction; the following, may be, most useful and appropriate.

Addison, On the Evidences.

Blunt's Veracity of the Gospels and Acts.

Butler's Analogy, with Introductory Essay, by Wilson.

Cecil's Reasons for Repose.

Doddridge's Three Lectures on the Evidences.

Grotius, with Le Clerc's Notes.

Erskine's Internal Evidences.

Gregory's Letters on the Evidences, &c.

Keith, On the Prophecies.

Paley's Work on the Evidences.

Pascal's Thoughts.

Rennel's Account of Struensee's Conversion.

Sumner's Internal Evidences.

Scott's Essays (Essay i.).

Wilson's, Daniel, Lectures on the Evidences.

XIV.

MISERY OF SCEPTICISM.

(Page 85.)

"WITH a mind *weary of conjecture*, fatigued by doubt, sick of disputation, eager for knowledge, anxious for certainty, and unable to obtain it by the best use of my reason in matters of the most importance, I long ago turned my thoughts to an impartial examination of the proofs on which revealed religion is founded, and I am convinced of their truth. The examination is a subject within the reach of human capacity; you have come to one conclusion respecting it, I have come to another; both of us cannot be right: may God forgive him that is in error."—*Watson* to the infidel *Paine*.

"He called philosophy, and with his heart
Reasoned. He called *religion*, too, but called
Reluctantly, and therefore was not heard.
Ashamed to be o'ermatched by earthly woes,
He sought, and sought, with eye that dimmed apace,
To find some avenue to light, some place
On which to rest a hope: but sought in vain.
Darker and darker still the darkness grew,
At length, he sunk; and Disappointment stood
His only comforter, and mournfully

Told all was past. His interest in life,
In being ceased : and now he seemed to feel,
And shuddered as he felt, his powers of mind
Decaying in the spring-time of his day.
The vigorous, weak became ; the clear, obscure :
Memory gave up her charge ; decision reeled :
And from her flight, Fancy returned, returned
Because she found no nourishment abroad.
The blue heavens withered : and the moon, and sun,
And all the stars, and the green earth, and morn
And evening, withered : and the eyes, and smiles,
And faces of all men and women, withered,
Withered to him : and all the universe,
Like something which had been, appeared ; but now,
Was dead and mouldering fast away.

Enjoyment now was done.

He had no hope, no wish, and scarce a fear,
Of being sensible, and sensible
Of loss ; he as some atom seemed, which God
Had made superfluously, and needed not
To build creation with ; but back again
To nothing threw, and left it in the void,
With everlasting sense that once it was.

Oh ! who can tell what days, what nights he spent,
Of tideless, waveless, sailless, shoreless woe !
And who can tell how many, glorious once,

To others and themselves of promise full,
Conducted to this pass of human thought,
This wilderness of intellectual death,
Wasted and pined, and vanished from the earth,
Leaving no vestige of memorial there?

It was not so with him, when thus he lay,
Forlorn of heart, withered and desolate,
As leaf of autumn, which the wolfish winds,
Selecting from its falling sisters, chase
Far from its native grove, to lifeless wastes,
And leave it there alone, to be forgotten
Eternally, God passed in mercy by—
His praise be ever new!—and on him breathed,
And bade him live, and put into his hands
A holy harp, into his lips a song,
That rolled its numbers down the tide of Time;
Ambitious now, but little to be praised
Of men alone: ambitious most to be
Approved of God, the Judge of all; and have
His name recorded in the Book of Life.”

POLLOK.

XV.

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE.

(Page 86.)

"I told him, that all his speculations of philosophy would not serve him in any stead to the reforming of his nature and life, till he applied himself to God for *inward assistances*. It was certain, the impressions made in his reason governed him as they were lively presented unto him; but these are so apt to slip out of our memory, and we so apt to turn our thoughts from them, and, at some times, the contrary impressions are so strong, that let a man set up a reasoning in his mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the poet,

'Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor,'

to be all that philosophy will amount to: whereas, those who, upon such occasions, apply themselves to God by earnest prayer, feel a disengagement from such impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them; so that those bonds which formerly held them fall off. *He could not say it was unreasonable to believe that the Supreme Being might make some thoughts stir in our minds with more or less force as it pleased Him; especially, the force of these motions being, for the most part, according to the impression that*

was made on our brains, which that Power that directed the whole frame of nature, could make grow deeper as it pleased Him. It was, also, reasonable to suppose God a Being of such goodness, that He would give His assistance to such as desired it: for though he might, upon some greater occasions, in an extraordinary manner, turn some people's minds; yet, since He had endued man with a faculty of reason, it is fit that men should employ that as far as they could, and beg His assistance, which they certainly can do. All this seemed reasonable, and at least probable. Now good men who felt, upon their frequent applications to God in prayer, a freedom from those ill impressions that formerly subdued them; an inward love to virtue and true goodness; an easiness and delight in all the parts of holiness; which was fed and cherished in them by a seriousness in prayer, and did languish as that went off; had as real a perception of an inward strength in their minds, that did rise and fall with true devotion, as they perceived the strength of their bodies increased or abated, accordingly as they had or wanted good nourishment."—Some passages in the *Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester*. By *Gilbert Burnet*, p. 43. Baynes's edition, 1820.

Mr. Locke thus expresses himself on this important point: "I must add one advantage more, which we have by Jesus Christ, and that is, *the promise of assist-*

ance. If we do what we can, he will give us his spirit to help us to do what and how we should. *It will be idle for us, who know not how our spirits move and act us, to ask in what manner the spirit of God shall work upon us.* The wisdom that accompanies that spirit knows better than we how we are made, and how to work upon us. If a wise man knows how to prevail on his child, to bring him to what he desires; can we suspect that the spirit and the wisdom of God should fail in it, though we perceive or comprehend not the ways of his operation? Christ hath promised it, who is faithful and just, and we cannot doubt of the performance. It is not requisite on this occasion, for the enhancing of this benefit, to enlarge on the frailty of minds, and weakness of our constitutions; how liable to mistakes, how apt to go astray, and how easily to be turned out of the paths of virtue. To a man under the difficulties of his nature, beset with temptations, and hedged in with the prevailing custom, *it is no small encouragement, that he is from a sure hand, and an Almighty arm, promised assistance to support and carry him through.*—Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. 103.

XVI.

EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

(Page 86.)

ALL attempts, formally to *prove* why the Deity should grant any thing in answer to prayer, which he would have withheld without it, are generally unsatisfactory to an inquisitive and sifting mind. For myself, I own, the metaphysical difficulties in way of *proofs*, in such questions as these, are always too many and too strong to allow of my deriving, any comfortable conviction from them.

I, believe, that specific, stated, audible addresses to the Deity are efficacious; because, having convinced myself that the Scriptures contain a revelation from that superior Fountain of intelligence, I find myself there, by a multitude of precepts and examples, exhorted and encouraged so to do. But, to the man who cannot take this as his warrant, it is to the general sense and practice of mankind, that we can alone refer him. Notwithstanding the metaphysical difficulties which occur to philosophers, it is, assuredly, from the recorded apprehensions of mankind in every age and place, upon this subject, a natural dictate of the soul to address itself in prayer and expectation to the Supreme: and, perhaps, one of the strongest proofs

that this is the will of the Almighty, is, that men should, somehow or other, have been led on and induced, notwithstanding all the speculative difficulties above noticed, to *continue* this, with so much perseverance and general persuasion of its efficacy; and this, not only through long individual lives, but, from generation to generation.

Why, the circumstance of our asking any thing of God, should make that consistent with his attributes, which would not have been so without it, it will never be possible, by abstract reasonings, adequately to explain. Besides, the authority of revelation, and the generally ascertained practice of people in a state of nature, various interesting analogies and suppositions may be urged, with great effect, upon the thoughtful mind; but, for *unclouded* demonstration, on such a subject, it is utterly in vain to look.

I will here insert, the usual difficulty, with some good suggestions on it, from one of the clearest of our casuistic writers; and afterwards append several other considerations, which seem to me to be of weight.

The usual difficulty then is, thus—"If what we request be fit for us, we shall have it without praying; if it be not fit for us, we cannot obtain it by praying." This objection admits of but one answer; namely, that it may be agreeable to perfect wisdom, to grant that to our prayers, which it would not have been agreeable

to the same wisdom to have given us without praying for. But, *what virtue, you will ask, is there in prayer, which should make a favour consistent with wisdom, which would not have been so without it?* To this question, which contains the whole difficulty attending the subject, the following possibilities are offered in reply :

"1. A favour granted to prayer, may be more apt, on that very account, to produce good effects upon the person obliged. It may hold, in the Divine bounty, what experience has raised into a proverb in the collation of human benefits, that, *what is obtained without asking, is often times received without gratitude.*

"2. It may be consistent with the wisdom of the Deity, to withhold his favours till they be asked for, as an expedient to encourage devotion in his rational creation, in order thereby to keep up and circulate a knowledge and sense of their dependence on him.

"3. Prayer has a *natural tendency to amend the petitioner himself* :* and thus to bring him within the

* "*Onuphrio*. I cannot believe that the adorations or offerings of so feeble a creature, can influence the decrees of Omnipotence.

"*Ambrosio*. You mistake me. As to their influencing or affecting the Supreme mind, it is out of the question ; but, *they affect your own mind*—they perpetuate a habit of gratitude and of obedience, which

rules which the wisdom of the Deity has prescribed, to the dispensation of his favours.

“If these, or any other assignable suppositions, serve to remove the apparent repugnancy between the success of prayer and the character of the Deity, it is enough: for, the question with the petitioner is not, from which, out of many motives, God may grant his petition; or, in what particular manner he is moved by the supplications of his creatures; but, whether it be consistent with his nature to be moved at all, and whether there be any conceivable motives, which may dispose the Divine will to grant the petitioner what he wants, in consequence of his praying for it. It is sufficient for the petitioner that he gain his end. It is not necessary to devotion, perhaps not very consistent with it, that the circuit of causes by which his prayers prevail, should be known to the petitioner, much less that they should be present to his imagination at the time. All that is necessary is, that there be no impossibility apprehended in the matter.” *

may gradually end in perfect faith—they discipline the affections, and keep the heart in a state of preparation to receive and preserve all good and pious feelings.”—*The Last Days of a Philosopher*, by Sir Humphry Davy, Bart., p. 106.

* “The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,” by *William Paley*, book v., chap. 2.

The general analogy of nature, serves to remove many surmises, as to the compatibility of God's fore-knowledge and unchangeableness, with man's entreaties. The term of our lives, and the degree of health and strength we shall enjoy, are matters immutably fixed in the divine omniscience; but yet, food, physicians, and fore-thought, and plans, on our part, are very important notwithstanding. They are, in fact, means, which we are required to use, to bring about certain well fore-known ends. The same line of argument will apply, with precisely the same cogency to Prayer.

There is, however, one consideration, which always seems to me to carry signal weight; namely, *the effect of audible and stated prayer, in drawing out the mind from the confusion of intense and multifarious speculation, or grief, or perplexity*; and fixing it upon the great elementary axioms and positions, from which it is so apt to wander; whilst, the audible and formal enunciation of the propositions then uppermost, enables the individual much better to judge of their weight and correctness, than when they existed only amongst the silent, abstract confusion of his mind. A man is often ashamed to hear how absurd and unworthy his perplexities have been. If the prayer be from a form, the eye and ear are aroused by something determinate; if it be spontaneous, then only the ear; but, either way, the senses are profitably called in to help disengage the mind, from that

tumult and perplexity of thought in which it will so frequently, from various causes, become involved. I have often experienced the advantage of this when completely incapable, from over-study or anxiety, of rousing my mind, by other means, to any thing like religious feeling. In this respect, the ordinance of prayer seems to resemble the Christian ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which by the consummate wisdom of the Instigator, something sensible and definite, though the most simple imaginable, is provided; to help out the busy mind, and fix it upon the proper object. As a student, I candidly own, that, if there were no other motives to audible and stated prayer; the singular help, I find it, in keeping my mind clear and active on the proper point, would alone recommend it.

But besides such considerations as the foregoing, the accumulated testimony of thousands, who have attained to the most exalted heights of piety and benevolence, as well as learning, is not to be overlooked.

Nor, the acknowledgments so often and so justly made by men largely experienced in such questions, that, precisely in the ratio, in which they discontinued their early habits of address to the Deity, they fell away into sin, and more or less of scepticism; and then again, as they afterwards were led to resume these neglected habits, so, the power and fascination of sin and prejudicial irregularity, gradually, but surely declined.

The Christian Scriptures are, it is well known, very full, upon this particular point; ascribing all holy desires, good counsels, and just works, and all substantial happiness, to the result of this practice; pressing us in every variety of way, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our request be known unto God; and, as such aid, if attainable, must be of immense help to a man, in every aspect in which we may review it, so, judging from my own experience, I should say, Ask, and you shall receive. And amongst other varieties, of the promised 'Peace' which passeth understanding, to keep one's heart and mind, not one of the least shall be, a practical, experimental conviction, and freedom from metaphysical perplexity, on the subject of this note, viz. *the efficacy of persistive prayers*.

Our great Milton, states the difficulty and solution very beautifully in the following well-known passage—

“ Eve, easily may faith admit, that all
The good which we enjoy, from Heav'n descends;
But, that from us aught should ascend to Heaven,
So prevalent, as to concern the mind
Of God, high-blest; or, to incline his will,
Hard to believe may seem; yet, *this will prayer*;
Or one short sigh of human breath, up-borne
Ev'n to the seat of God. For since I sought
By pray'r the offended Deity to appease,

Kneel'd, and before him humbled all my heart,
Methought I saw Him placable and mild,
Bending His ear; persuasion in me grew
That I was heard with favour, peace returned." &c. &c.

Par. Lost. Book xi.

XVII.

FORMS OF PRAYERS, BY LORD BACON, &c.

(Referred to in Appendix, iv.)

I.—AGAINST CONFUSION AND PERPLEXITY OF THOUGHT.

"O Lord, my maker and protector! who hast graciously sent me into this world to work out my salvation, enable me to drive from me all such unquiet and perplexing thoughts, as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which thou hast required.

"When I behold the works of thine hands, and consider the course of thy providence, give me grace always to remember, that thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor thy ways my ways.

"And while it shall please thee to continue me in this world, where much is to be done, and little to be known, teach me, by thy Holy Spirit, to withdraw my mind from *unprofitable and dangerous inquiries,—from difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be*

solved. Let me rejoice in the light which thou hast imparted; let me serve thee with active zeal and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."—*Johnson.*

II.—THAT SCIENTIFIC PURSUITS DO NOT INTERFERE
WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEF. BY LORD BACON.

"To God the Father, God the Word, God the Spirit, we pour forth most humble and hearty supplications, that He, remembering the calamities of mankind, and the pilgrimage of this our life, in which we wear out days few and evil, would please to open to us new refreshments out of the fountain of His goodness, for the alleviating of our miseries. This, also, we humbly beg, that *human things may not prejudice such as are divine*; neither, that *from the unlocking of the gate of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, any thing of incredulity or intellectual night may arise in our minds, towards divine mysteries.* But rather, that by our mind, thoroughly cleansed, and purged from fancy and vanities, and yet subject, and perfectly given up to, the Divine Oracles, there may be given unto faith the things that are faith's. Amen."

III.—ON THE STUDY OF RELIGION.

“ALMIGHTY God, our Heavenly Father, without whose help labour is useless, without whose light search is vain, invigorate my studies; that I may, by due diligence and right discernment, establish myself and others in thy holy faith. Take not, O Lord, thy holy Spirit from me; let not evil thoughts have dominion in my mind. Let me not linger in ignorance, but enlighten and support me, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”—*Johnson*.

IV.

“I know not, I wonder how I shall succeed in mental improvement, and especially in religion. O! it is a difficult thing to be a Christian. I feel the necessity of reform through all my soul. When I retire into thought, I feel myself environed by a crowd of impressive and awful images. I fix an ardent gaze on Christianity, assuredly the last, best gift of Heaven to men; on Jesus, the agent and example of infinite love; on time, as it passes away; on perfection, as it shines beauteous as Heaven, and alas! as remote; on my own beloved soul, which I have injured; and on the unhappy multitude of souls around me; and I ask myself, why do not my passions burn? why does not zeal arise, in mighty wrath, to dash my habits in pieces,—to scourge me from indolence, into fervid

exertion, and to trample all mean sentiments in the dust? At intervals, I feel devotion, and benevolence, and surpassing ardour; but when they are turned towards substantial, laborious operation, they fly, and leave me spiritless amid iron labour. Still, however, I confide in the efficacy of persisive prayers; and I do hope, that the Spirit of the Lord will yet come mightily on me, and carry me on through toils, and sufferings, and death, to stand in Mount Zion, among the followers of the Lamb."—*Foster*. Author of "Essays on Decision of Character," &c.

XVIII.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, TRANSLATION, &c.

(Page 80.)

THOUGH the object of this treatise is neither to state, nor to answer in detail all the objections which may be urged against, the evidence for Christianity; yet, a concise outline of that evidence has been afforded, (pp. 80-84), and, an ample list of approved writers, on all branches of that evidence, appended.* Various difficulties have been already obviated as we have

proceeded: some, most peculiar to our days, have been treated of at length, and references given for the further prosecution of them. We have also noticed the opinions of some sceptical writers, upon whom the present generation are disposed somewhat to rely.

It cannot, now, be useful to speak much of such almost forgotten names as Chubb, Morgan, Tindal, Voltaire, and the French Encyclopedists. Let the value of most of their opinions be estimated by one, who was, in his time, a most distinguished member of that Atheistic fraternity.*

Nor, would it be other than a waste of labour, in

* Je consultai les philosophes, je feuilletai leurs livres, j'examinai leurs diverses opinions; je les trouvai tous fiers, affirmatifs, dogmatiques, même dans leur scepticisme prétendu, n'ignorant rien, ne prouvant rien se moquant les uns des autres; et ce point, commun à tous, me parut le seul sur lequel ils ont tous raison... où est le philosophe qui pour sa gloire, ne tromperoit pas volontiers le genre humain? où est celui, qui, dans le secret de son cœur, se propose une autre objet que de se distinguer. Pourvu qu'il s'élève au dessus du vulgaire, pourvu qu'il s'efface l'éclat de ses concurrens, que demande t'il de plus. *L'essentiel, est, de penser autrement que les autres.* Chez les croyans il est athée, chez les athées il seroit croyans.—*Rousseau. Emile*, lib. iv.

this place, to dwell upon the hacknied and ignorant objections which the infamous Paine, and, in more modern times, the frantic Taylor, having concentrated in their publications, led to those memorable replies of Watson, and Mr. Scott, and Dr. Smith, and the learned author of the Remarks on the Diegesis. If the reader has happened to pick up any of the wretched plausibilities above named, in one or other of these easily accessible and compendious treatises, he will find them all fully and satisfactorily answered.*

But, perhaps, it may be thought desirable here, briefly to notice an opinion which is sometimes heard from persons who, on the whole, profess themselves well satisfied with the Divine origin and authority of the Scriptures; namely, that our present authorized *translation* of them is not to be entirely depended on. Any one who may desire to follow up this point

* If he has leisure and opportunity, it will be also most agreeable for him to turn to the *fuller* discussion of all these points in *Hale's* Analysis of Chronology; *Horne's* Introduction; *Faber's* Horæ Mosaicæ; *Graves* on the Pentateuch; Notes in *D'Oyly* and *Mant's*, and *Scott's* Bibles; *Stackhouse*; *Stillingfleet* Origines; *Faber's* Origin of Pagan Idolatry, &c., &c.

For some general instructions and cautions on Scripture difficulties, see p. 89.

minutely, is referred to the learned and indefatigable *Mr. Horne's* Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures, and to the numerous references, as well as testimonies there given at length in its behalf, (vol. ii. chap. 6, sec. 3). Beyond a question, a revision of our present version would be highly desirable; to exchange some antiquated phrases for more modern, and supply some names, and alter some few expressions, which the present advanced state of science and research would enable us to do, with increased interest and advantage; but, that any material alteration, anything affecting the fundamentals of Christianity, requires alteration, seems improbable, from the still unanimous testimony of the most learned among * all classes of the dissenters and controversialists, (and I may add, with respect to the Old Testament, the † *Jews* also), as to its general excellence and correctness; notwithstanding their widely discrepant opinions on many subjects, and the desire which might be supposed natural among them, to throw discredit upon

* The Unitarian version is, surely, too outrageous and absurd, for one moment to be considered in the light of an exception!

† See *Mr. Hyman Hurwitz's* *Vindiciæ Hebraicæ*. London, 1821.

any *one standard* translation, which must, of course, not be equally friendly to them all.

One of the most learned and distinguished amongst the dissenters from the established church of this country, has pressed this argument, with great clearness, and a candour which does him honour. Enforcing to his congregation, the proposition, "*that the translation now in their hands might be depended upon, as in all things, most material, agreeable to the original;*" he thus proceeds.—"This is a fact, of which the generality of men are incapable of judging immediately; yet, it is a matter of great importance; it is, therefore, a very great pleasure to me to think, what ample evidence you may find another way to make your minds as easy on this head as you would reasonably wish them. I mean, by the *concurrent testimony of others, in circumstances in which you cannot imagine that they would unite to deceive you.*

"I believe you have seen few in the place where I now stand, that could not have told you, as I now solemnly do, that, on a diligent comparison of our translation with the original, we find, that of the New Testament (and I might also add, that of the Old) in the main, faithful and judicious. You know, indeed, that we do not scruple, on some occasions to animadvert upon it; but you also know, that these remarks affect not the fundamentals of religion, and seldom reach any farther

than *the beauty of a figure, or at most, the connexion of an argument.*

“But I desire not that a matter of such moment should rest on my testimony alone, or entirely on that of any of my brethren, for whose integrity and learning you may have the greatest and justest esteem. I rejoice to say, that this is a head on which we *cannot* possibly deceive you, if we were ever so desirous to do it. And indeed, in this respect, that is our advantage, which in others is our great calamity,—I mean, the diversity of our religious opinions. It is certain, that, where-soever there is a body of dissenters from the public establishment, who do yet agree with their brethren of that establishment in the use of the same translation, though they are capable of examining it, and judging of it; there is, as great evidence as could reasonably be desired that such a translation is in the main right; for if it were in any considerable argument corrupted, most of the other debates, would quickly lose themselves in this; and though such dissenters had all the candour, tenderness, and respect for their fellow Christians, which I hope we shall always endeavour to maintain, yet they would no doubt, think themselves obliged in conscience to bear a warm and loud testimony against so crying an abomination. But *we make no complaint on this subject*; we all unite in bearing our testimony to the oracle of God as delivered in our own language.

Oh that we were equally united in regulating our doctrine and our discipline, our worship and our practice by them !

XIX.

SCIENCE AND REVELATION, NOT OPPOSED.

(Page 90.)

"It cannot be desired, that the details of either natural or moral philosophy should be perpetually interlarded with scraps of theology, as the interest, neither of religion nor of science, would be advanced by so inconsistent a mixture. But, most important it is, that in every department of philosophy the mind should be led upward, to discern the intimate connexion and absolute dependance of all things upon *God*; that their beginning should be traced to the causation of his power, and their end to the fulfilment of his will. It was this which added to the researches of Newton,*

* "It is, in fact, a happy circumstance for mankind, that geniuses the most transcendant and original that ever lighted upon our world, who have thirsted the most ardently for knowledge, and have vindicated most boldly the freedom of the human mind from every yoke but that of truth, have been the farthest from meriting such a charge" (the charge of irreligion, applied to

of Bacon, and Locke, an elevation, a clearness, and a consistency, to which, otherwise, even with the powers of their mighty minds, they could never have attained. They drank deep of the fountain of all truth; they began and ended in God. In Newton, especially, to whom it was reserved, to bring the universe, and the laws which govern the universe to light, we observe this prostration of soul before the first great Cause of all things.

"Yet we do not find, that his researches are the less profound, his reasonings the less luminous, or his intellect, the less penetrating."—*Rennel*.

From scientific investigations, conducted with such continual reference to the Deity, and a spirit of such unfeigned lowliness and humility, as distinguished that giant in human intellect, revelation has nothing to fear, but much to hope.

There is, indeed, a possibility which must be closely watched by the more experienced, of intellectual *surfeit* and intemperance, in these days,

"For knowledge is as food; and needs no less
Her temp'rance over appetite, to know

Bacon's writings when they first appeared) "in the writings they have left us. Such were Newton and Bacon, and Milton and Locke."—*Library of Useful Knowledge*.

In measure what the mind may well contain ;
 Oppresses else will surfeit ; and soon turns
 Wisdom to folly ! as nourishment to wind."

Par. Lost. Bk. vii.

There is, likewise, a danger, in such times, of a too great withdrawing of the mind from things which *most* concern us, and "too exclusive a devotedness to those remote from use, obscure and subtle."*

But let us, on the other hand, beware of that other, if not *equally* dangerous, yet, most bigoted and prejudicial extreme, which Bacon has so justly and memorably exposed. "Through the ignorance of certain divines," writes he, "the passage to any philosophy, though ever so true, is almost blocked up. For some are foolishly alarmed, lest a deeper inquiry into nature

- * "But apt the mind or fancy is, to rove
 Uncheck'd ; and of her roving, is no end ;
 Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learn,
 That, not to know at large of things remote
 From use, obscure and subtle ; *but*, to know,
 That which before us lies in daily life,
 Is the prime wisdom : what is more, is fume
 Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
 And renders us in things that *most* concern
 Unpractis'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek."

Par. Lost. Bk. viii.

should transgress the bounds of sobriety; and they injudicially wrest what is said in Scripture against those who pry into *divine* secrets, and apply it to the hidden things of *nature*, which are nowhere forbidden. Others, with greater craft, imagine, that if men are kept in ignorance, all things may be the more easily managed by dexterity of hand, and the *divining rod*, which they think is highly serviceable to religion; this, however, is nothing else than to aim at pleasing God by a lie. Others again, dread the effect of example, lest any changes or movements in philosophy should fall at last on religion itself. Others are afraid, lest, in the inquiry into nature, something should be found which may overturn religion, or at least undermine it, especially among the ignorant. These two latter kinds of fear appear to me altogether to savour of a groveling wisdom; as though men, in their secret thoughts, were doubtful and distrustful of the stability of religion, and of the power of faith over the senses; and on this account apprehend danger to it from the search after truth in natural things. But whoever considers aright, will acknowledge, that, next to the *word of God*, *the most certain cure of superstition, and the best aliment of faith, is the knowledge of nature*. Therefore philosophy is given to religion as her most faithful handmaid; the one manifesting the will, the other the power of God; nor did He mistake, who said, ‘Ye err, not knowing

the Scriptures, and the power of God ;' thus inseparably blending and joining together, the knowledge of his will, and the contemplation of his power."—*Bacon's Novum Organon Scientiarum*. Quoted, p. 32 of No. x. of Library of Useful Knowledge.

XX.

LEARNED BELIEVERS.

THOUGH I would not press the argument for the truth of Revelation, arising from the assent of those exalted and good men who have embraced it, beyond its legitimate application ; I cannot yet forbear, in this place, inserting a portion of a speech, by the late eloquent Lord Erskine, made on the occasion of a prosecution, for the publishing of the wretched Paine's "Age of Reason : " where his Lordship most powerfully and truly contrasts the faith of such as Newton, and Locke, and Boyle, and Milton, with the malicious ignorance of that desperate unbeliever. " It seems, gentlemen," said he, " this is an age of *reason* ; and the time and the person are at last arrived, that are to dissipate the errors, which have overspread the past generation of ignorance. The believers in Christianity are many, but it belongs to the few that are wise to correct their

credulity. Belief is an act of reason, and superior reason may therefore dictate to the weak.

“In running the mind along the long list of sincere and devout Christians, I cannot help lamenting, that *Newton* had not lived to this day, to have had his shallowness filled up with the new flood of light.

“But the subject is too awful for irony; I will speak plainly and directly. *Newton* was a Christian!—*Newton*, whose mind burst forth from the fetters cast by Nature upon our finite conceptions. *Newton*! whose science was truth, and the foundation of whose knowledge of it was philosophy; not those visionary and arrogant presumptions, which too often usurp its name, but philosophy, resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, cannot lie. *Newton*, who carried the line and rule to the utmost barriers of the creation, and explored the principles by which, no doubt, all created matter is held together, and exists.

“But this extraordinary man, in the mighty reach of his mind, overlooked, perhaps, the errors which a minuter investigation of the created things on this earth might have taught him, of the essence of his Creator.

“What, then, shall be said of the great *Mr. Boyle*, who looked into the organic structure of all matter, even to the brute, inanimate substances, which the foot treads on? Such a man may be supposed to have

been *equally* qualified with Mr. Paine, to 'look up through Nature, to Nature's God.' Yet, the result of all *his* contemplation was, the most confirmed and devout belief, of all which the other held in contempt, as despicable and drivelling superstition.

"But this error might, perhaps, arise from a want of due attention to the foundations of human judgment, and the structure of that understanding, which God has given us for the investigation of truth.

"Let that question be answered by Mr. *Locke*, who was, to the highest pitch of devotion and adoration, a Christian. Mr. *Locke*, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper track of reasoning, the devious mind of man, by shewing him its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense, to the last conclusions of ratiocination; putting a rein, besides, upon false opinion, by practical rules for the conduct of human judgment.

"But, these men were only deep thinkers, and lived in their closets, unaccustomed to the traffic of the world, and to the laws which practically regulate mankind!

"Gentlemen! in the place where we now sit, to administer the justice of this great country, above a century ago, the never-to-be-forgotten Sir *Matthew*

Hale presided, whose faith in Christianity is an exalted commentary upon its truth and reason; and whose life was a glorious example of its fruits in man: administering human justice, with a wisdom and purity drawn from the pure fountain of the *Christian* dispensation, which has been, and will be, in all ages, a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.

“But it is said by the author, that the *Christian* fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may easily be detected by a proper understanding of the mythologies of the Heathens.

“Did *Milton* understand those mythologies? was *he* less versed than Mr. Paine in the superstitions of the world? No; they were the subject of his immortal song; and though shut out from all recurrence to them, he poured them forth from the stores of memory, rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order, as the illustration of that real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid genius, which cast a sort of shade upon all the other works of man. The mysterious incarnation of our blessed Saviour, (which this work blasphemes in words so wholly unfit for the mouth of a Christian, or for the ear of a court of justice, that I dare not, and will not, give them utterance), *Milton* made the grand conclusion of the “*Paradise Lost*,”—the rest from his finished labours,—

and the ultimate hope, expectation, and glory of the world.

“ A virgin is His mother, but His sire
The Power of the Most High ; he shall ascend
The throne hereditary, and bound His reign
With earth’s wide bounds, His glory with the heavens.”

Paradise Lost, Book xii.

4





